# How to Live Twelve Months A Year

MAHATMA DEVESH BHIKSHU

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# PREFACE

Vedic literature contains the Constitution meant for all the human beings to follow in life, so that all of us may be able to achieve our desired goal in this world.

So, please take stock of your position month after month throughout the year, and go on advancing, consulting the book every now and then.

With Blessings,

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[ 1 ]

# Speciality (वैशाख)

Each and every person has his own distinct individuality and so each and every individual has his or her own distinct personality, in that we see that no two persons are alike in all respects. This is not only applicable to man alone, surprisingly this rule also equally applies to all the species, be it a bird or animal. So, what a wonderful world God has created. And we are able to recognise one from the other only because of this distinction between man and man, between woman and woman, between cow and cow and so on and so forth.

Mind you, this difference is not only limited to contour, shape and look or appearance of face and body, but goes far beyond, deep down right up to our blood. You might have seen that those who are literate generally give their signatures and those who are illiterate are asked to affix their thumb impressions, when required to do so, on some important papers. The simple reason is that as our hand-writings differ, so the thumb impressions also differ from one another. The police also keep records of the finger impressions of the criminals and bad characters, only because the police are able to find out and investigate the cases on the basis of these, by tallying the finger impressions of the criminals, whenever any such incidents occur.

Similarly, you might have heard how in hospitals blood is kept group-wise. Because our blood though red in colour, appearing just quite similar, yet differs vastly and for this reason the doctors insist on giving the same group of blood to a patient in case of transfusion. In some cases, even blood of the same group is rejected by the system of the concerned patient, because even this does not fully suit him. The medical science has categorised human blood into a few groups, but as a matter of fact, every individual's blood is quite different from the other, similarly as every individual's face is quite different from anybody else's. This is also true, I learn in so far as our hair are concerned. And if we go deep analytically into the matter, we will find that no two things are similar completely and fully in toto

So, we come to the conclusion that God has made us distinct in all respects and therefore would it not be proper for us to achieve distinction by specialising in the sphere, which is to our liking and suits us most. This is more applicable to the student community, who after getting the necessary education and training in their respective institutions, will have to undertake the responsibilities in the worldly sphere. There are hundreds and thousands of activities and it all depends on you and your own individual liking, flair and taste as to which you may adopt in life. But one point must be certain in your mind that you have to make your own special place in that particular sphere of activity. It matters little as to what it may be. But if it is more to the good and well-being of the people as a whole, it is likely

to be more popular, which should enable you to earn not only a respectable living, but name and fame besides.

In this context, the following verse from the Rig-Veda is worth quoting :

स्वस्ति पन्थामनुचरेम सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।
पुनर्ददताघ्नता जानता संगमेमहि ॥

We may ever unswervingly follow the path of duty like the sun and the moon, who never fail or absent from their work on any pretext whatsoever, come what may. And both of them are the shining examples of doing all to the good of others. If we may also unswervingly devote our life in any task which is in the good and welfare of all, we are sure to shine one day. May we have the company of such people, who believe in giving to others, *i.e.*, are able to remove the wants of all and this class is known as Vaishya in our society, as per the Varna system We may either move in the society of people who are able to impart justice to the aggrieved and suffering and this class is known as Kshatriya in our society. We may either have the company of such people, who are capable of imparting education, knowledge and learning to the ignorant ones and this class is known as Brahman in our society.

We may indeed be able to imbibe all these qualities in us and thus say that may we move in the society of the learned and the pious, who are charitably disposed and are always just and non-violent in their deeds. Because a person, with some speciality of any one Varna, should in reality possess the qualities of the other Varnas as well in ample measure.

Then and then only, he can be termed as a brave, charitable and learned one.

You may have noted that in this Mantra, we have expressed our desire to follow the path of duty like the sun and the moon. Now what are the specialities which the sun and the moon possess. It is because of these two, more so because of the sun that all the living-beings on this earth get their sustenance. As all the vegetation, grain, fruits, etc., that grows here on our earth is the bounty of the sun. It is a scientific truth because the sun through its sharp rays picks up the water from the seas, rivers, etc., and after purifying the same returns it to us through the clouds, as a result of which we are able to get our necessities of life in the shape of grain, fruits, vegetables, etc., growing in abundance because of the rains. Hence, we should also be bright and shining like the sun and the moon and whatever our duties are, these should be such as to be useful to the society as a whole.

Besides, it is also due to the sun and the moon that we are having the cycle of the different seasons round the year. Also the twelve months in a year are named after the Nakshatras through which the sun travels on its course. These twelve months are in order—(1) Vaishakh—Special branch of the tree; here the world has been described as a tree and Man should ever strive to be its special branch, not the ordinary, *i e*, we should always try hard to have some *speciality* in us. (2) Jyashtha—We should ever try hard and perform such deeds in life so that we may be counted amongst the great

ones. It is not proper to remain just ordinary, but strive hard to be 'a face in the crowd', that can be recognised by all and sundry. Hence, our aim should be to achieve *greatness* in life. (3) Ashadha—We should be *holy* and pure and may not be suppressed or overpowered by anybody or the evil forces which oppose us in our good and noble deeds. But we should possess indomitable courage and cross all the hurdles that come in our way boldly, displaying *fearlessness* in life. (4) Shrawana—Man learns all from the very child-hood by listening to others. So, we should be careful and *listen* only the noble ideas and thoughts that may uplift us to the desired pedestal. Vedas are also called Shrutis only because these were handed down by Acharyas to their disciples through discourses. (5) Bhadrapada—We may step out on the path of goodness, nobility and virtuosity, thus making our *character* splendid and superb, never erring even in forgetfulness on undesirable course, improper for a man. (6) Ashwina—We should proceed quickly, without *any procrastination* on the path chosen by us, because any delay caused may prove very harmful in the long run. This may even prove suicidal ultimately. (7) Kartika—We should ever strive to be the commander of the forces and be able to lead the righteous and virtuous side to *victory*. From eternity, the world has been divided between the good and the evil, known as devas and asuras. It should be the bounden duty of all good people to muster all power and strength so that the gods, *viz*., the noble and virtuous side, becomes *victorious*. (8) Agrahayan—As already described in our journey of life, we must lead the masses towards the goal of goodness.

For this purpose, we must have a *leader*, who can lead us properly and we should be ever ready to accept this role as and when required. This month is also known as 'Marg-shirsha', the meaning of both the words 'Agrahayan' and 'Margshirsha' is just one and the same. Thus these two words are synonymous. (9) Pausha—We should be able to sustain and nourish those who are dependent on us. Besides, there may be quite many who look to us for *help* and sus-tenance and it certainly behoves us to extend our helping hand to them in time] of need. (10) Magha—Here we have been told to be illustrious, prosperous and all-powerful like our Father, the Almighty, never having any feeling of weak-ness at any time of our life. We must move like *Indra*, as the immortal son of one, who has created this wonderful uni-verse. (11) Phalguna—We have again been reminded to be careful in life and through self-introspection find out our weaknesses and frailties and endeavour to *discard all evils*, so that our aim or object may become near that is so dear to us. (12) Chaitra—Having nurtured all the above-mentioned qualities, no doubt you are going to be a *wonderful* persona-lity, with all glow and splendour, glory and fame that may be worth emulating by the generations to come.

These being the twelve months to be discussed in this book, we have now to talk about 'Speciality' and consider as to how a student can acquire some expertise or specialisa-tion during his study-period. As you all know and fully understand, we are passing through the age of competitions and this competition is bound to increase day after day in all the spheres of activities of mankind. It is, therefore, but

proper for the students to be ready to meet this challenge in life and prepare accordingly from the very beginning, rather than wake up late and thus be left behind in the race. It is seen that some students are aware and quite keen from the very start of their school career and generally top in their classes. It may be that in quite many cases, their parents help them by teaching them at home. All the same, the need is there to be efficient in all the subjects that are being studied and more so in at least some. Besides, it is most likely that you may have special interest in some particular subject in which you are always able to score almost hundred per cent marks.

In addition, some students are more fond of games and sports. It is also good to attain skill in any one discipline of sports, as competitions are arranged these days, not only on local basis, but on national and international levels. Not only this, the times have vastly changed and those who excel in games or sports are given preference in employment and are being given promotions, not based on their performance in their work or profession, but because of their good performance in sports. Hence, to gain expertise and skill in sports is a great qualificatian these days. You will also gain name and fame besides. Similar is the position of the tinsel world or silver screen and the cinema stars who were looked upon as inferior and low in society some years back, are now regarded as more respectable than politicians even. So, what matters most in the modern world is to achieve speciality, be it in any field or sphere of activity. But in so far as you, students, are concerned, I would advise you to pay special attention to your studies and attain speciality in any of your subjects, *e.g.*, in arts or science, in huma-

nities or technology, in business management or commerce, in agriculture, architecture or farming.

In Vedic times, there was great emphasis on specialisation in our education system prevalent in those days, as all the children studying were categorised in three different Varnas, *viz.*, Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya. And they were given learning and training accordingly, after they had the basic elementary knowledge, common to all. Their Acharyas decided the Varnas, having assessed the children's aptitude and liking. But the selection of Varnas was not permament, because it generally depended on a person's behaviour and conduct in his life and in many cases, it was subsequently changed. Since the Varna, which is now known as caste-system, was totally based on the actions and deeds, and not on birth as it is prevalent these days. So, it can be safely inferred that every child was required to specialise in a particular Varna, the duties of which he or she was required to discharge in his/her daily life.

According to Manusmriti, the duties of the four Varnas (including Shudra) are as under :

अध्यापनमध्ययनं यजनं याजनं तथा ।
दानं प्रतिग्रहश्चैव ब्राह्मणानामकल्पयत् ॥ 1-88 ॥

The six duties of a Brahman are—study, teaching, performance of yajna, officiating at the performance of yajna, to give charity and to receive charity. But to receive charity is an humbler duty.

प्रजानां रक्षणं दानमिज्याध्ययनमेव च ।

विषयेष्व प्रसक्तिश्च क्षत्रियस्य समासत: ।। 1-99 ।।

The duties of a Kshatriya are—(1) Judicious government of the subjects, *i.e.*, impartial regard of the virtuous and condemnation of the wicked and all-round protection of all. (2) Spend money and other resources for the propagation of education and piety and in the service of deserving persons. (3) To perform Agnihotra etc. or to get them performed. (4) To study Vedas and other scriptures and to arrange for their teaching. (5) To abstain from sensual indulgence and through self-restraint (brahmacharya), keep the body and the spirit strong. (6) To be brave at all times, especially in the times of war. (7) Ever to exhibit valiance and never to demean self. (8) Perseverance. (9) Dexterous and (10) Firm and fearless.

पशूनां रक्षणं दानमिज्याध्ययनमेव च ।

वणिक पथं कुसीदं च वैश्यस्य कृषिमेव च ।। 1-90 ।।

The duties of a Vaishya are—(1) To maintain and multiply the breed of domestic animals, such as cows, etc. (2) To give money, etc., for the progress of education and piety. (3) Performance of Agnihotra and other yajnas. (4) Study of the Vedas and other scriptures. (5) All business and trade. (6) Money lending at reasonable rate of interest. (7) Agriculture.

एकमेव तु शूद्रस्य प्रभुः कर्म समादिशत् ।

एतेषामेव वर्णानां सुश्रूषामनसूयया ।। 1-91 ।।

For a Shudra, it is proper to abandon such civil ways as recrimination, jealousy, vanity and to serve the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas with due respcct and to earn his living thereby.

The above brief description clearly tells us that each person was allotted the task according to his ability, capacity and merit. It was job-oriented and the composition of such society was conducive to the progress of humanity. In this context, it should always be borne in mind that in case the children of a Brahman remained ignorant and stupid, they were bound to be Shudras. Similary was the case with the children of a Kshatriya or that of a Vaishya. In case a Shudra's children became meritorious, they were bound to go up the ladder, suiting their merit and qualities. In such a system, the lower classes will have an incentive to go up by acquiring the required knowledge, learning and character. Physical labour was meant for Shudras only because they being uneducated could not uudertake any other work requiring some knowledge; bodily service they could do easily. Now it is for the rulers to organise the functioning of the Varnas properly, so that there may be peace and tranquillity in the state. There was no place for untouchability or hatred towards any section of the society.

According to the Varna system, all the people in the society were required to be specialist of some sort, so that they could fit in the fabric. The education of the girls was given special attention, considering the fact that they were required to undertake the duties of house-

wives and, therefore, all the knowledge that a housewife ought to know, was given to them. Also, the factor that a girl has limited years of time at her disposal as compared to a boy, was taken into account, because girls generally mature at an early age and their syllabus was planned suitably, taking all these factors into consideration. It was essential for girls to study Ayurveda, because it is the branch of knowledge that gives them the necessary understanding about food, consisting of various things, such as grains, dals, vegetables, fruits, milk, curd and so on and their effects on health under certain conditions of the body. Actually, Ayurveda was only the know ledge of the proper adjustment of the right type of foodstuffs taken by the people in meals, so that they remain not only healthy bodily, but also mentally alert and intellectually sharp. Now, our housewives do not have this basic knowledge and, therefore, people suffer from various diseases, which could be avoided, if this elementary knowledge could be imparted to them earlier during their childhood.

So, we find that speciality in one branch or the other of human activities is a *must* for all of us, not only for survival, but also the fact that the expertise and skill that you gain is bound to give you an important place in the society in which you live. You will agree with me on this point that we all love to be respected and any speciality that you have earned for yourself through hard-work, dedication and devotion with honesty and truthfulness will certainly earn you respect as well. Hence, what matters most is that you should never feel proud of the speciality you possess,

but your behaviour and conduct with all those who come in contact with you should be most courteous and polite. But whatever you say, you must keep your word and never act like the politicians, lest people may become disenchanted soon. This equally applies to students going in for higher studies, who should ever be on guard in so far as their character is concerned.

Here we have told you in this chapter about the first month of our Indian calendar year Vaishakha (Vi+Shakha), *i.e.*, we should try to have some speciality, as the composition of our body clearly indicates. Hence, in this month, you may give your full attention to this and strive your best to achieve the aim of speciality in you.

## [ 2 ]

# Greatness (ज्येष्ठ)

Our country Bharat is Great—भारत देश महान् । Our ancient glory, our traditional past, our country's mountains and rivers, its natural resources, its great people, its sages and saints, its Munis and Rishis, its kings and monarchs, its culture and civilisation and above all its greatness lies in its geography and history. There was a time when Vedic culture was the norm of the day and all its thirty-three crores of people were known as Devatas, *i.e.*, not only learned, but excelled in their behaviour, character and conduct. The whole world looked to it for advice and guidance and the epithet 'Jagat Guru' was commonly used for this country. But where have we reached now ? Can the downfall not be arrested or can we not take some inspiration from our past ?

Some students may possibly think that what this greatness has got to do with them, their studies and their work and career as such ! In this connection, I may tell such students that this has got very much to do with you, because you are the builders and actual makers of the destiny of this great country of tomorrow and it is, therefore, your first duty to think in those terms. A country is great if its people are great and you can be great if you think and make up your mind to be great.

'Coming events cast their shadows before' and this is true in quite many cases. Because the seeds of goodness

and greatness are sowed in childhood and these sprout and grow by and and by, culminating in the end in a fully grown up tree with the passage of time. Here I may relate two important incidents from Mahatma Gandhi's life. In his autobiography, he has narrated :

"(1) During my first year at the school, when I was studying in the first standard, Inspector Guiles of the Education Department came to inspect our school. He asked us to write five words in English. Out of these, one word was 'kettle'. I spelt it wrongly. Our teacher slightly hit me with the toe of his boot to warn me about my mistake. But I could not understand what he meant. My teacher wanted me to copy the spellings from the boy's copy sitting next to me. But I did not copy, as desired by my teacher and the result was that I was the only boy whose all the five words were not correct. Later on, the teacher explained to me about my folly, but I was not influenced by it. I could not learn to copy in this manner, as I considered this a dishonest practice.

"(2) At the age of about fifteen, I and my brother had incurred a debt of Rs. 25 and we were worried as to how it could be paid. So, we decided to steal some gold from my brother's armlet, which was made of solid gold, as it was not difficult to cut away one tola gold from it. It was done and the debt was duly paid. But this incident began to haunt me and became intolerable for me. I, therefore, decided that I would never resort to theft in future. I also felt that I should confess my guilt before my father, but I could not gather

courage to speak. I penned a confession and personally handed over the same to my father. In the letter I confessed the guilt and sought due punishment, requesting that he should not grieve over it, as I promise not to commit any such misdeed in future."

From the above two incidents during childhood, it is quite clear that his character and courage asserted and Mohandas Karamchand thus was able to shape his own destiny and later on became famous as Mahatma Gandhi. Such incidents occur in the life of most of the children. But how many are able to take lesson from these ? Mahatma Gandhi has written in his autobiography that in his childhood, he saw the drama of Satyawadi Raja Harishchandra, by which he was so much moved that tears trickled down his cheeks throughout the show. He was so much inspired by this drama that he took a vow there and then in his own mind to adhere to truth in his life at all cost.

There are many glorious examples like this and we have to learn something from these, so that our own life may have some meaning in this world. In ancient vedic times, our education system was such that each and every child was given proper training, in which more emphasis was laid on character. Unlike modern times. when most of our education is theoretical the students had to live with their Acharyas all the twenty-four hours and thus practical experience of all what they learnt was given to them. Moral courage, honesty and truthfulness were the qualities which were ingrained in the minds of the students from the very beginning. Besides

simplicity and hard work were the key-stones on which the foundation of the students character was laid. For this reason, they were known as Acharyas, *i.e.*, who built the shining characters of their disciples; the Acharyas' duties were not limited to teaching alone.

For a man of character, self-restraint or brahmacharya is most essential. In olden times, the period of study, *i.e*, the student days were known as Brahmacharya Ashram. In other words, a student must be a Brahmachari or *vice versa*. The word Brahmacharya is a combination of two words, *viz.*, Brahma + charya; the meanings of Brahma are—God, Veda, Knowledge and Semen. Charya means to think, study, obtain and preserve. Hence, in this way the meanings of Brahmacharya are—To think of God; to study the Vedas; to obtain knowledge and to preserve semen (the vital fluid of life). If we take the sum-total of all these into account, it comes that a Brahmachari's duty is to maintain his physical health and enhance his mental faculties.

Brahmacharya is such a source of energy that even well-nigh impossible feats can be accomplished by this, In Atharva Veda, it has been stated :

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवा मृत्युमपाघ्नत ।

On the strengh of Brahmacharya and its proper observance in the right spirit, the learned persons have challenged

the Death even. Only about five thousand years ago, Bhishma Pitamah, who was nearly two hundred and fifty years of age at the time of Mahabharata War, fought so bravely for eleven days that even when he fell down wounded, remained alive for a few months till he wanted to live and gave up his life of his own accord when the sun turned north-wards. The deeds of Maharaja Hanuman, who observed Brahmacharya in his life, are quite well known. Seeing all this, we have to accept that Brahmacharya is such source of power by which a man can do the impossible almost immediately, miracles may take a trifle longer.

If we have a look at the biographies of great men, we will discover the truth. Mahatma Gandhi has written the accounts of his experiments of self-restraint and undoubtedly whatever he was able to do in his life-time, it was all due to his observing Brahmacharya, The biography of Swami Dayanand Saraswati is an illustrious example of all to see and emulate in case you want to follow in the footsteps of such great souls. The preservation of semen is absolutely essential for the student community if they want to achieve something in this competitive world. 'Healthly mind in a healthy body' and for a student, his brain should be fed with this fuel of vital fluid, so that his memory becomes sharp. This also helps in the development of his mental faculties which enables him to discover and invent new courses and trends in the different fields of arts and science.

Brahmacharya is the ladder through which a student can climb up to any height he desires. There is indeed no limit as we have many examples to show this. Mahatma Buddha Mahavir Swami, Christ are well known. Similarly, Adi Shankaracharya, Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati and later on Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose all these great men practised Brahmacharya in their lives. Verily Brahmacharya is the base on which the edifice of greatness can be built though slowly, but surely and certainly. It, however, depends on our efforts and those who actually adhered to the norms of Brahmacharya, they were able to attain holiness and purity and were duly rewarded, proportionate to their endeavour.

Often it is said that children are the images of God. Why ? Because of their innocence, they are holy and pure in the true sense, not having been tainted by the vices of this world. And those who are able to resist the temptations of the two, mainly that of कंचन व कामिनी, *i.e.*, the glitter of gold and the charms of the damsels, have no attraction for them, they go on advancing on the royal path of Brahmacharya and are able to climbs the peak in the end, while most of the people get entangled and their journey is cut short accordingly.

In order to be steadfast on truthfulness in thought, words and deeds, to love simplicity and austerity so that you may gladly welcome the difficulties and troubles, to remain ardent and zealous and to be even eager to know about the reality, Brahmacharya is utmost essential. It is impossible to adhere

to the above vows without Brahmacharya. A person, who does not observe brahmacharya in life, can never adhere to truthfulness. His soul-power cannot be so strong that he may be prepared and able to accept the attacks of sword on his body. He can never fully grasp the idea of good or bad, thus how can he be ready to face all the difficulties that are bound to come at each and every step. As already stated earlier, it is not only the means of purification, but bestows divinity, which ultimately leads one to salvation or in the simple language near to God. only because he is able to attain godliness in him,

In Atharva Veda, God has been called as the great or the greatest, since none can reach to His pedestal. But man is His supreme creation and has been called as the immortal son of God, being really great amongst all the creatures of the world. It, therefore, behoves man that he should ever strive to achieve the greatness, imbibing the qualities of his Father, never thinking in low terms but always up and up, higher and higher.

स्रक्त्योऽसि प्रतिसरोऽसि प्रत्यभिचरणोऽसि ।
आप्नुहि श्रेयांसमति समं क्राम ।।

Oh Man ! your nature is progressive; you are to go ahead; you can overcome all your vices by attacking them. Therefore, lead the people and thus pave the path for greatness. It is the habit of Man to ameliorate the condition and rise to the occasion and do away with all his enemies that hinder his progress. Therefore, it is proper for us to work hard sincerely and thus leave behind our equals in the journey of life and be able to do good to all and to ourselves.

In every sphere of activity, we have not to look to others for help, but self-help is the best, and surest way to success. We should even be truthful, honest and hard task master in so far as our own selves are concerned and discard all the vices that arrest our progress in life and in their place, implant some virtues and making these stepping stones, climb to the top. Remember the cardinal truth that there are no short-cuts to success and such success that can be achieved the easy way is not worth enjoying.

In Vedic literature, gods have been known to be such individuals, who fill themselves with knowledge and power and are able to give all kinds of help to the needy and down-trodden. The following verse in Sam-Veda says :

अभि द्रोणानि बभ्रवः शुक्रा ऋतस्य धारया ।
वाजं गोमन्तमक्षरन् ।।

The great ones lead their life in the following manner :

(1) They are ever busy in doing noble and virtuous deeds, which are of general weal, in the interest of the nation as a whole with all their might. They never do any such deed that may not be helpful to others of the nation and to their own selves. They develop their power and their viewpoint is always to utilise the same for the good of the country. In this way their life-span is spent and sacrificed at the altar of service to humanity.

(2) They are able to give the necessary protection to others and because of their capability, they also provide with the wherewithal of life to the poor. In this way, they become glorious, because their mission in life is to be of some help to the needy.

(3) They do their work quickly and move with confidence, as they have full faith in their capacity. Because they have risen above their sensual pleasures by observing Brahmacharya, having conserved their vital fluid, which gives them unlimited energy and strength to cope with the hardest task at hand. The question of idleness or laziness does not arise in their case, as they have crushed these weaknesses altogether.

(4) Such divine people are regular and punctual in their duty, as they fully understand the value of time and that of timely help. For them tomorrow never comes and the idea 'now or never' is uppermost in their minds. They fully understand how procrastination kills enthusiasm and inspiration in the bud and, therefore, ever keep this devil away from them.

(5) They fill themselves with the true knowledge of the Vedas and scriptures and discharge their duties accordingly, having attained the required power and strength. They are always eager to utilise their education and learning, so that their practical utility may be tested on the anvil of time.

Such people who follow the above five methods in life become great and rise to the category of gods who always give, give and give all what they can to others, whether in the shape of education and knowledge, or protection and justice, or by fulfilling their necessities of life and wants.

There is a Tibbetan tale or folk-lore—There was a cluster of mosquitoes and they had their king, who was considered very important amongst them. All the mosquitoes were living with their families, some in some dirty shoal and others on some shrub or on some heap of rubbish or cow-dung, etc.

Now, they had shifted from some place and settled in the new ones but the problem was where to lodge their king. Quite near to their place, they spied an elephant, tied to a tree and it was decided that the king along with his family may live in the ear of the elephant. The king of the mosquitoes along with his family reached there and he announced very loudly thrice by buzzing in the ear of the elephant that he was the king of the mosquitoes and was going to use the elephant's ear as his palace. But the elephant did not know anything at all. You will also not know if any mosquito or more appropriately any louse makes his abode in your body or in the hair of your head and announces the same.

So, the king of the mosquitoes kept on living in the ear of the elephant. After some days, the mosquitoes were able to find some more habitable place. Now, the king of the mosquitoes buzzed many times to his utmost strength and power, only to thank the elephant, announcing that he was leaving his ear for a better place. But the elephant did not know anything. At this, all the mosquitoes made a great sound by buzzing together and at last the elephant could hear something. But the elephant replied—"I do not know as to when you came and actually even now I do not know or feel any difference about your leaving." This equally applies to most of us in this world. We come and depart and the world does not feel any difference and most of us go unsung and unwept, just like the mosquitoes. We do not leave any footprints on the sands of time because we have not done anything tangible, that may carve our names in the temple of fame.

The following Mantra from Atharva Veda exhorts us in very glorious terms :

शुक्रोऽसि भ्राजोऽसि स्वरसि ज्योतिरसि ।
आप्नुहि श्रेयां समति समं क्राम ॥

You are brave, with your vital fluid intact; you are glorious and capable of withstanding all the hardships and tribulations, you are full of moral courage and soul-power; you are aglow with luminous lustre. Therefore, go ahead and give a lead to your equals and excel in the sphere of your activity. Man is endowed with special virtues of intelligence, power of speech and the power to do work with both of his hands, having ten fingers. These are the three special gifts of God to the mankind and he has to be all careful in making proper use of this trio. In Vedic language, these are known as मनसा-वाचा-कर्मणा । A man ought to harmonise his thoughts, words and deeds.

Concluding this chapter, I may once again tell the readers that it is all within your own power, your own desire and your own endeavour that you can raise yourself to the category of the great ones. There is nothing to stop you from joining this class; you have only to follow the advice given in the Vedas. This month is called 'Jyeshtha' because the days are the longest as the sun remains shining for about 14 hours in this part of the world. Light being the symboi of knowledge and knowledge being the symbol of greatness, probably the month has been named 'Jyeshtha' because according to Vedic philosophy there is nothing just by chance, but every nomenclature has its meaning and clearly denotes its purpose. And the period of student-life is to attain know-

ledge through education, learning and training, thereby giving you the opportunity to be great. Considering this, in olden times, even a king used to give way to a Brahmachari or Snatak, if he happened to come to the town.

Hence, remember the fact that no great man ever complains of want of opportunity. Shakespeare says—"But be not afraid of greatness : some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust on them." Having studied the lives of great men, it will be seen that most of them were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with all their energy, enthusiasm and hard work.

## [ 3 ]

# Holy And Fearless (अषाढ़)

'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.' All human-beings try and want to remain clean in all respects, so much so that the extreme end of cleanliness has taken the shape of fashion. The craze of fashion as we witness today is so much that the phrase of 'Excess of everything is bad' aptly applies to this. Inner cleanliness is termed as Holiness and undoubtedly more emphasis must be given to this phase in life. Because it helps in building up the right atmosphere in our social fabric.

The meaning of the word 'holy' is that which is sacred, pious and free from sin and is perfect in moral sense. All of us want to be holy and for this, we take our daily bath. It is only to cleanse our body and we may, therefore, say it is only external holiness. But inner holiness means purification of mind, heart and soul. Maharaja Manu says in his famous book Manusmriti :

अद्भिर्गात्राणि शुध्यन्ति मनः सत्येन शुध्यति ।
विद्यातपोभ्यां भूतात्मा बुद्धिर्ज्ञानेन शुध्यति ।।

The body is cleansed by water; our minds can be cleansed by Truth. The Soul can be cleansed by education and penance. While brain or intellect can be cleansed by knowledge and learning. In this shloka, we have been briefly but clearly told how to clean our heart and soul, our mind and intellect.

But what matters most is to put these into practice and then only we will be able to make ourselves holy and pure.

These days most of the people have acquired some sort of blind faith and think erroneously that our sins can be washed by taking a dip in the river Ganga. It is a mistaken belief. Our scriptures clearly state—अवश्यमेव भोक्तव्यं कृतं कर्म शुभाशुभम् । Our deeds, good or bad, have to be fruitioned and we will have to reap the harvest. There is no way of escape from this.

In this context, I am reminded of a story in parable form. Once Narad Muni Maharaj happened to visit our planet in the month of Kartik-purnima, when people from all over the country go to take bath in the river Ganga. Seeing great rush of pilgrims, he enquired them as to where were they heading to and for what ? The reply he got was that they were all going to take bath in the river Ganga to shed their sins. At this, he also joined them and on reaching there, he asked the river Ganga—"All these pilgrims leave their sins behind with you; please tell me what you do with all these sins ?" Ganga replied—"I do not keep them with me; these are taken away from me by the rays of the sun." At this Narad Muni went to the sun and asked him—"I am just coming from the planet earth and there I saw multitudes of people running towards the river Ganga to take bath and wash their sins. When I enquired of Ganga as to what she did of the sins, she told me that these are being taken charge by you. Please tell me as to how you dispose them of ?" The Sun replied that he did not keep the sins with him, but des-

patched them on to the clouds. At this juncture, Narad Muni headed towards the clouds and asked them the same question about the disposal of the sins which had been sent to them. The reply of the clouds was—"We do not keep the sins with us either; we return the sins back to those on earth who committed them, in the shape of rains, excessive at times. causing floods and havoc." Thus, the sins come back to their perpetrators. So, mind you that you are likely to get the results according to your hard work in your studies. Even if some of you resort to malpractices, as we read these days, the result will be just as you deserve. Besides, this method will deprive you of the real and true knowledge, which will certainly prove harmful to you in the long run and you also acquire bad habits in the process.

There is a wise saying—'The foolish seek for wealth, the wise for perfection.' As a student, you are trying your best to garner knowledge and the end result of that knowledge is that you be a perfect man. Wealth or money matters little, it is bound to come to you, once you have the requisite qualities in you, for which you are eagerly looking forward and the time is not far off when you will have to face the realities of the world. To own good qualities, with virtuous traits and noble ideas is holy. These are going to stand you in good stead in your future life.

In Upnishadas and in Vedas, our body has been called 'Ayodhya", *i.e*, which cannot be conquered by anyone in a battle. This being invincible, there can be no fear from anywhere in so far as outside forces are concerned. But you have-to conquer your own self, your vices and evil habits and pro

pensities. Thus, you have to make firm determination and resolve to advance towards divinity and holiness. Mind you, all true knowledge is divinity and your duty is to acquire as much education and knowledge as possible.

Remember, man is nothing but what he thinks. Hence, your thoughts and ideas should always be pure and elevating, never of bad or evil happenings. These appear to be attractive but are very much harmful and will pull you down to the abyss of darkness, from where escape may become almost impossible. Our body has been called as the abode of 'devas' and we have to maintain their true characteristics by our thoughts, words and deeds, lest by our carelessness, they may not be converted to devils.

You, students get weekly holidays, besides many other holidays which come quite often, more so in the schools and colleges. But have you ever thought what holiday means? Obviously, its terminology suggests that it is a day on which you have to perform some holy task, which because of the carelessness and routine, you have altogether forgotten. In my opinion, all days ought to be holy days, because we should never do any such thing which is unholy in character and undesirable in appearance. But on a holiday, students should take stock of their past six days, whether they have per chance or by mistake erred somewhere, or done any such act that may bring bad name, not only to you individually and personally, but also to the institution, to the family to which you belong and to the student community as a whole.

You are here to learn all good things in life—as the pur-

pose of education is not only to limit you to your books of the course prescribed. I am sure, you all know this quite well by now. Then why shun your responsibilities; you must shoulder these bravely and courageously so that you may become an asset to the organisation or institution to which you belong. In this way, you will not only bring honour to your own self, but also to the institution and the family to which you belong. Even the people of our country get a sense of elation when any Indian is able to achieve some marvellous result, as happened some years ago, when Shri Hargobind Khurana was awarded the coveted Nobel Prize for his research work he was able to do.

If any student maintains his health properly and fully devotes his time to his studies, he is indeed holy. Of course, he should also learn to perform 'Sandhya' twice a day, in the morning and evening, as this will give him an opportunity to seek all power from the Almighty, besides the divinely guidance. This will give him an added strength to make headway in his studies and make him holier still. We find that most of the students waste their time in useless trifles these days and give less of their energy and time to their main work of studies. It is unholiness, because a student has to be sincere and truthful towards his studies and if he neglects his main task and duty, he is not observing the rules of truthfulness. And untruth is the greatest sin. You have, therefore, to be cautious on this score.

Those of you who are not sincere and dutiful towards your studies, remain always in fear from all round. They are not only afraid of the ghost of examinations, but are also

afraid of their teachers, and their parents alike, besides their own Atman, which condemns them fortheir negligence day after day and year after year. But this is not the case with many of your colleagues, who are actually dutiful and sincere and you may be one of them. Such students generally hold top positions in their classes and become favourite ones of the teachers. Their parents feel proud of them. You must be experiencing this in your life. So, fearlessness comes from doing your duty well. In this way, your conscience remains clear and you feel happy all the while. Because to you, the examinations rather afford an opportunity to show your worth and you move with self-confidence, knowing full well the result quite in advance. This is mostly the case of the toppers in the university, which they have told to the reporters of the newspapers, records of which are published therein.

So, the first thing that every student ought to do to be fearless is that he should never neglect his studies. In our country, majority of the students come from poor or lower middle class families and therefore the fear of poverty keeps on haunting them all the time. While their studies are hampered because of poverty at every step and they have to run about to meet their needs, even if somehow they are able to finish the studies though not up to the stage they would have desired, the acute problem of finding a job or employment stares in the face. First their study is cut short and then in order to sustain their families, they have to do whatever they can, irrespective of their qualifications and merit. Because our country has a large force of unemployed educated youths, most of them have to accept whatever they can in the circum-

stances. Many even cannot get any and frustrated with their lot, resort to suicide.

The fear of poverty is considered the greatest evil on earth and for this reason, the students who are fortunate enough to be able to get proper education, should work hard and make themselves capable to earn money and wealth in plenty, so that they may not only become self-sufficient and self-supporting, but be able to extend a helping hand to others in time of need. Our Government has done little in this direction, though they boast so much, yet a large percentage of our country's children are not given proper education, namely because of the scourge of poverty.

The greatest reason and stumbling block is that the western system of education, more so in a foreign language, is so expensive that most of the learned people agree that this system has proved a drag in the progress of the nation. Not because it is alien in nature, but also because it has proved very costly and a large majority of our children remuin untouched by it. Most of the people cannot afford the expenses and the Government also cannot go on financing, finding it almost an unmanageable task. Therefore, under such circumstances reversion to the age-old system, if resorted to and planned, can prove immenssly advantageous, as also it would afford employment to a large section of the people. The Ashrama educational system has an in-built characteristic of being profession/vocation-oriented and the problem of employment gets solved automatically thereby.

The makes of our constitution very wisely decided about the national language to be Hindi, but sub-

sequently the Government has been dithering on this important issue that has a significant bearing on the future of the country. Hence, at present, education-giving to all children of our country has assumed a gigantic proportion and consequently with all the endeavours of the Government, they cannot make the resources available to even half of the populace. Not only education, vast majority of our people do not even get two square meals a day and many die because of starvation. This is the plight of our country at present and here at least man is no more than a beast, who is at the mercy of the nature. It is mainly because we have not been able to do away with our slavish mentality and a few people at the helm of affairs exploit the large masses of the people in the name of a great democracy in the world.

It is all farce, because very little work has been done to ameliorate the condition of the people of large, mainly because the machinery is so overwhemingly corrupt and the policies adopted have totally proved ineffective. Yet in their own selfish interests, the rulers do not see the options and ignore all pleas to the contrary. They are only interested about their chairs and somehow want to maintain the *status quo* and are continuously reaping rich harvest because of the ignorance of the people. That is why they do not want that the public should become educated and intelligent, lest they

may be able to see through their game and unsettle them. The root cause of this all is the system of education that is alien to our civilisation and culture. And so long as we do not wake up to this reality, the gool, is likely to remain as far as ever.

Another basic fear of man is that of ill-health. As the origin of this fear also emanates from that of poverty, the student community cannot remain unaffected by it. When even the basic necessities of life are not available, then how can you expect that one can remain fit and healthy ! Our Vedas and Vedic scriptures have laid great emphasis on the maintenance of good health, because if we are not keeping fit, how can we pursue the aim, which we have decided. That is why our Rishis have explicitly stated that everybody should always maintain a sound health, in order to lead a happy life. शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्म साधनम् । It is the body which enables us to perform our duties well and if the body suffers from some ailment, how can one discharge his duties, as he will first have to seek cure to the disease and only after he gets well and becomes quite fit, he can resume his work.

It is through the observance of brahmacharya that a student can make his body as strong as the mountain and as hard as a stone—this has been told to us in the Vedas. A strong body is indeed a great asset and those who ignore

the basic principles of health, only dig their own graves. धर्मार्थ काम मोक्षाणां आरोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम् । In Yajur-Veda, we have been advised to understand the important place of the body as it behoves all human-beings that they ought to keep themselves healthy and fit, without any ailments whatsoever, by their eating habits and leading a regular life. Because without good health, nobody can carry out his bounden duties even, what to talk of Dharma-Artha-Kama and Moksha, *viz.*, Righteousness-Wealth-Want and Salvation, the four fruits of an individual's life, which all should cherish to accomplish.

Solely because of these two basic reasons and the apathetic attitude of our Government in so far as the welfare measures of the people are concerned, we have drawn a blank at the Seoul Olympics held recently, where even the tiniest countries could secure some medals and find some honourable place in the annals of the games, being held at international level. We are the second largest country in the world and so much of population, but could not prove our worth in any discipline of the sports held at Seoul. While we have a large force of people who organise and look after the sports matters, besides the Sports Ministry, who is duly paid and looked after well, only to mismanage the affairs. The problem is not that Indians cannot make champions, but is is because of the self-seeking, pettifogging

officialdom which is sitting atop of Indian sports. Truly. one of the athletes remarked—"'It is not that we are following the wrong system, but that we have no system at all.'' Can you imagine the fact that our largest sports stadium was being used for a rock concert soon after our magnificent performance at the Seoul Olympics ?

I may take the opportunity to advise the student community to agitate for the change in the educational system, the medium to be in them other-tongue at the primary stage, which can later be that of the national language, so that most of our children may not have to waste the valuable time only to learn the foreign language that generally becomes the greatest barrier in their progress. Mahatma Gandhi considered the foreign language a great curse on our people and wanted to do away with the same as soon as possible. Because in his opinion, the intellect of our students gets stunted in trying to learn the foreign language and thus they can hardly make any real progress or research.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 'Young India' in 1927 that in ancient times our Brahmacharis were known to be following the path of God and kings and emperors and all great men gave them regard and respect. It was the duty of the

governments or the rulers of those days to take over the responsib ility of all their expenses and in turn these brahmacharis gave to the nation not only good citizens but many a time hundredfold strong force, in physical, mental and spiritual power capacity that raised our country to the pinnacle of glory.

[ 4 ]

# Listen (श्रावण)

The importance of listening is so much that all our business in this world entirely depends on this. All our knowledge comes through listening and it is such a source that in ancient times the Acharyas passed their knowledge to their disciples by word of mouth. Thus all the knowledge was preserved. That is why Vedas are known as 'Shrutis' meaning thereby the treasure of knowledge that has been passed from generation to generation with the aid of listening. Vedas being dependent on listening, the name 'Shruti' given to the Vedas truly indicates its purpose. Even otherwise, we find that a child whose hearing faculty does not work from the very beginning cannot speak either and thus becomes dumb as well. This is actually the reason of some people being deaf and dumb. Really speaking, their speaking faculty is in order, but as they cannot hear anything, the speaking faculty also gives way and is finished. The moment their hearing faculty begins to work, their speech-power is bound to follow suit.

The above view is confirmed from the fact we observe daily in our life, in that a child born in a family of an Indian learns to speak the language spoken by the members of the family, whatever it may be, say Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, etc. Similarly a child born in Russia or England or Germany is bound to learn and speak the same language, *i.e.*, Russian or English or German. It is because he or she hears the

words of these languages from the very beginning and begins speaking the same language in course of time. Hence, it follows that our speech is according to what we hear. In this connection, I read somewhere that King Akbar once carried out the experiment by keeping some children away from their parents and the people. They were served their food, etc., but nobody was allowed to speak before them. The result was that all the children became just like animals, having learnt no language at all. So, we find that all human progress is dependent on our senses and each organ of perception has its role to play. While the respective roles of each sense are vital, the roles of the power of speech and the power of hearing are so very basically significant, without which the development of our mental and intellectual faculties gets dulled.

Our five senses of knowledge, which are directly controlled by our mind, are intrinsically linked to the five basic elements, of which our bodies are composed. These are ether (sky), air, fire, water and earth—these have their five corresponding organs or senses, in that ether is related to sound and ears, air is related to touch or to skin of our body; fire is related to form and to eyes; water is related to taste and to the tongue; while earth is related to smell and to the nose. Here we see that our sense of hearing the sound is directly the outcome of the skies and as the sky is pervading all through, whatever we speak travels through it in an instant and the audio system works based on this science. The one meaning of the word 'Shrawan' is 'skies' as also listening.

The month being that of rains is closely connected with the skies and as our ancestors, who had been initiated in Vanprastha or Sanyasa Ashramas, were no longer able to stay in the forests because of the excessive rains, used to return to the villages or towns nearby and camped there for the rainy months, passing their time giving discourses to the Grahasthis. Hence, the beginning of 'Shravani Parva' during which Ved-Kathas or Upnishad-Kathas, etc., were arranged at various places at this time of the year. People thronged to listen to their ancestors, *i.e.* Vanaprasthis and Sanyasis, and they emphasised the need of 'Swadhyaya', *i.e.*, Self-study in their discourses, pointing out the need of every household, so that the people may become righteous in their behaviour, character and conduct.

For a student, self-study is as important as food and water to the body. No student can do without it and those who ignore the role of self-study cannot be successful in their mission. What is self-study ? It has double meaning·(1) a student must inculcate the habit of studying himself, besides what he learns at school or college. The more he is able to do so, the better his performance will be in his class. The home-work given to a student is also the part of self-study and no student can afford to ignore his home-work. Not only students but even grown-up people have to do their home-work. For example, a teacher or a professor or a preacher must do his home-work in case he wants to perform his duties well. Otherwise, he may be found wanting and it it also possible that he may not be able to give proper answer or solution to a problem that may crop up all of a

sudden. But if he has done his home-work, he should then be able to foresee any such situation and be prepared well for the same. (2) A student must think about his own self, *i.e.*, he should form the habit of self-introspection to know about his weaknesses, faults and foibles, so that he may be able to find ways and means to eradicate the same well in time before the final examination.

In Sanskrit or Hindi, it is called Swadhyaya and here the word Swadhayaya has five meanings—(1) Swadhayaya word is composed of Su+Adhyaya, as also Swa+Adhyaya. Su+Adhyaya means that a student should only study good books and such other literature that may uplift his character. He should not study trash material and cheap novels, which describe and narrate about sex and violence and many other vicious ways of life, because such tales leave an ugly impression on the mind. These are very harmful and though appear attractive and charming to the young minds, these are like poisonous pills sugar-coated. Hence, these must be avoided. Even detective novels and stories come in this category, because these also partly deal with such subjects. In the category of good books, besides those precribed for the class in which student happens to study, he may read the autobiographies of great personages, like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Swami Vivekanand, Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati, Abraham Lincoln and so on, due to their inspiring value. It would be much better if a student can take interest in historical and philosophical books, like Bhagwad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upnishadas and

Vedas. It is not so difficult to read these nowadays, because Hindi and English translations are easily available.

(2) Swa+Adhyaya means that a student must study on his own, in addition to what he has learnt at school or college. This is very essential, as already emphasised earlier. (3) Swadhayaya also means self-introspection and this point has also been detailed previously. (4) Swadhayaya further means that a man should know his own self, *i.e.*, his own Atman. It is very-very important and unless you are not in a position to distinguish between your body and your soul, you cannot aspire to reach far in your destination. As a matter of fact, this is the stepping stone towards realisation of Paramatman. Remember, we are all Atmans and this body is our home where this Atman resides. And it is only in the body of a man or woman. that this atman can rise to a very high pedestal. Therefore, the importance to realise your own-self, *viz.*, Atman becomes all the more significant. (5) Swadhyaya also means that having known your own-self, you should go ahead and be able to realise Godliness or God. This is the ultimate aim in life. Those who are anxious to know more details on this subject, are advised to read the author's book entitled "Know Thyself".

Human life has been divided into four Ashramas, *viz.*, Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprasthn and Sanyastha. The word Ashrama is a combination of Aa+Shrama, which means that all human-beings, be they in any ashrama, must work hard incessantly. It has been truly said that human

life becomes meaningful by adhering to Ashramas and the word Ashrama becomes meaningful by self-study or swadhyaya. In Manusmriti, it has been stated :

संन्यसेत् सर्वकर्माणि वेदमेकं न संन्यसेत् ।
वेद संन्यासतः शूद्रः तस्माद्वेदं न संन्यसेत् ॥

A Sanyasi may give up all worldly things, including Sandhya and Yajna, etc. But he should also not give up Swadhyaya because self-study is such a labour that is essential for all the four Ashramas.

The Vedas lay great emphasis on swadhyaya or self-study. In Rig-Veda, there is a verse that narrates the healthy influence of self-study on human-beings. Because it is the inspiration that one gets from these that he begins to acquire the divine qualities in him and in the process, he not only becomes purified himself but is able to influence others, who come in contact with him. It is a great penance and a great yajna which everyone should perform according to one's ability. While the three Ashramas (Brahmacharya, Vanaprastha and Sanyastha) are exclusively for Swadhyaya, even in Grihastha ashrama, one is expected to devote some time to Swadhyaya daily, without fail. That is why at the Convocations, Acharyas used to advise their outgoing students, when taking leave from their Ashramas :

स्वाध्याय प्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ।

Never be indolent in self-study or giving discourses. This should be your daily routine, as your bath and food. Similarly you should study and give some talk on such subjects to the members of your family, so that the whole family may benefit from this.

From Self-study or Swadhyaya, our thoughts become pure and our knowledge increases day by day. Man is nothing but what he thinks and if we are able to purify the thoughts of the human race, that will be the greatest service to the world as a whole and the era of Ram-Rajya is likely to usher in, as was the dream of Mahatma Gandhi. It was also the intention of almost all the great people in the world. Standing water stagnates. Similarly, in the absence of study, good thoughts fade away and man in general becomes prey of vices, like greed and lust. This is actually the bane of the present-day society and mankind is suffering from these ills because of its ignorance about our Vedic literature. We are limiting our sphere and in this way becoming like a frog of the well. If we devote some time for study of good books as suggested herein, the healthy influence which will be there can well be seen after a year or so.

In case the Government can be persuaded to adopt the Vedic system of education or even implement the decision

they have taken as per the Constitution about the national language, a new era and atmosphere of unity fused with our civilisation and cultural heritage are bound to come up in about a decade's time. But unfortunately, our rulers want to please everybody on this score and this is impossible, forgetting the fact that a large section of the people do not want them to continue, then why are they sitting firm in the saddle, in case they want to please one and all.

On the basis of self-study, an ordinary person can become a great man. Many people achieved greatness by being self-studious. There are many examples before us and we should try to emulate them. Mahatma Buddha was not given any training of what he did. It was all because of his own self-experience, feeling and thinking that he chalked out his own course of action as per the dictates of his Atman. Nobody forced him to leave his house, wife and child and go to the forests to attain the knowledge which he did. Similar was the case of Mahavir Swami. It was all on their own volition and the spark of knowledge that kindled in their hearts became so dear to them that it changed their life altogether, that could not be surmised by any.

Later on, we find the same story being repeated in many cases. Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati left this home and hearth when he was a youngman of about twenty-one years of age and all preparations for his wedding were being made. But he left his house for good, never to return, only because of

the gleam of light which awakened in his soul. It was all his own making as all his family members were very much averse to the course that he adopted. I call this the streak of self-study and to my mind all great men were the outcome of following the call of their own conscience, entirely disregarding the advice of the world. Actually, they rose above these mundane matters, only because they listened to the call of their conscience and were able to follow the same vehemently at all costs. They actually bought all sorts of troubles in the bargain by sacrificing all the comforts of life which they could have for the asking and most of them were really having these all, though these were not to their liking, as their heart lay somewhere else.

Because of Swadhyaya or self-study, an ordinary person can become a great man as already shown above. Pandit Kshemkaran Das, who was born in a Kayastha family and had learnt Urdu and Persian languages, when came into contact of Arya Samaj at the age of 55, he learnt Hindi and Sanskrit and and in a few years time, he became such a learned personality that he was able to write the 'Bhasya' on Atharva Veda. His commentary in Hindi of the Atharva Veda was the first of its kind and even today it is acknowledged to be one of the best translations.

Swami Shivananda has written at one place—Good books are the repository of fine thoughts. By their study,

all worries vanish; there is no question of indecisiveness and noble thoughts grow up in the mind, thus giving peace and bliss. Shri Lokmanya Tilak, who wrote his volumions commentary on Gita in Mandalay prison in Burma, says—"I shall welcome a good book even in hell. Because these have such powers that they change the place into heaven almost at once."

In Shatpath Brahman, Mahrishi Yagyavalkya has written about Swadhyaya that negation in this is unforgiveable. He states in this vein that the sun, moon and other stars, the various rivers and the seas, the mountains and the trees, these all are doing their duties on time, but it is only Man, who does not think that what would happen if these inanimate objects of Nature do not perform their duties, annihilation and wholesale destruction of the entire universe. But in case Man gives up his duty of Swadhyaya, then something more disastrous would happen. And that is what we are witnessing in our present-day world. Indeed it would be far better if the whole world is destroyed than this excess of bad behaviour and conduct of human-beings that has turned the world into a veritable hell.

Mahrishi Yagyavalkya has described the immense advantages of Swadhyaya in his famous book, known as Shatpath Brahman, which I briefly recapitulate—By

Swadhyaya, a man becomes like a Yogi, *i.e.*, the ups and downs of life do not upset him, as he becomes the master of his ship and the actual maker of his own destiny. He does not look to others for guidance or help because he has confidence and trust in his ability and power. He remains unpertured by the material condition and has a sound sleep, without any worry. For any ailments, he is his own plysician because, as a rule, such a person does not have any major disease except if involved in any accident. As he has controlled his passion, he should normally be healthy and strong. He always enjoys the company of noble souls through their books and remains in peace and in a state of bliss. His intellect becomes sharp and he equally cares for all the living beings. As a matter of fact, such a person is the real leader of the people and the public look to him for guidance and succour. His name and fame soon spread all over and people flock to him to seek his advice and blessing. He is even worshipped because of his innate qualities and glory and they consider it a privilege to offer him gifts of all kinds. But he is above all these mundane things.

Swadhyaya bestows inner happiness and the more we take interest in it, the more understanding we achieve. From Manusmriti, the following verse is worth quoting :

यथा यथा हि पुरुषः शास्त्रं समधिगच्छति ।
तथा तथा विजानाति विज्ञानं चास्यरोच्यते ॥

As a man studies the Shastras, *viz* , upnishadas, Vedas, etc., so will he be able to understand these and ultimately these will become more and more interesting to him. This can be experienced in life. Any subject that in the beginning appears to be difficult, becomes easy and interesting if you continue with perseverance and its secrets will be known to you and you will begin to relish the knowledge. Because you have to earn it the hard way. And remember that pearls cannot be had on the surface of the sea. You have to dive deep to pick them up. Only useless and hollow books like stories and novels can be read and understood by all, not the Shastras like upnishadas and Vedas which contain all knowledge of Nature, *viz* , Material, Soul and God.

All knowledge comes through listening at the first stage and later on through Swadhyaya. It has been truly said—"The three foundations of learning are—Seeing much, suffering much, and studying much." You hear so much in this world, but what matters most is what you listen, so that it goes right to your heart and mind and becomes your part in course of time. That which provokes you to think and ultimately becomes the centre of your thought is nothing but what you are. Because it enables you to expose your own thoughts, your own ideas and all that comes to you from listening to your own opinion. Hence you have to be choosy in what you listen, so that you may be able to take a noble step in life. In the end, I may tell you that nature has given us two ears and one tongue—a design to mean that we should listen more and talk less.

# [ 5 ]

# Noble Step (भाद्रपद)

After listening and learning as to how a man should lead his orderly and peaceful life, it becomes necessary for him to act accordingly, so that whatever knowledge he has gained may be utilised properly. Otherwise it has no meaning if our actions do not reflect the advice and precepts that were meant to be fully translated in the fields of activities of our day-to-day life. But unfortunately we find that the greatest curse of our present times is that people say and profess something and do something else, *i.e.*, our professions and actions do not tally with each other.

In Atharva Veda, we have been warned about it as under :

सं श्रुतेन गमेमहि मा श्रुतेन विराधिषि ।

It is a prayer stating "Whatever we listen, we may become one with it and it may become our life-long companion; these sermons may ultimately become part of our life. We may never part company and never act which may appear contrary to what we listened and learnt."

Those who want to proceed on the path of nobility, the very first and most important point to note is that whatever they listen, read and get advice in the discourses, they should adhere to them in life. It should never be taken lightly and ignored because such a habit is most harmful. Hence, we should learn to accept the sermons as the gospel truths and it is only then that we can reap benefit out of these. So, for full one month, you have to strive hard and practise this deliberately and if you find that you are slipping anywhere, you have to make redoubled effort to make up your lapses.

After all what was there in the incident of 'Shiv Ratri' when Dayanand got the light, that gleam of real knowledge which stirred his soul. The incident of a mouse climbing on the Shiv-ling in the temple, gave a jolt to Dayanand. Had anybody preached through some verses of the Vedas to Dayanand or some good orator had given any discourse ? Yet that night Dayanand got much knowledge that his name along with that light of Shiv-Ratri have become famous. Therefore the sum and substance of all is that Dayanand knew how to attain real knowledge, as he was ready for it. On the other hand, most of us are not even prepared for it. He was duly prepared and he got it. If we may also get ready and be prepared, certainly our life will also change. Hence, be ready to learn; be prepared to learn.

The incident of Shiv-Ratri gives this sermon to all the disciples and followers of Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati. Do we listen to this discourse or we are like the people about which the following verse of Rig-Veda says :—

उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः श्रृण्वन्न श्रृणोत्येनाम् ।।

There are quite many people in this world, who are looking yet do not see, who are hearing yet do not listen.

Think, do you come in this category ? Though our ears are wide open, yet we are not listening. This indeed is too bad to describe. Listen—you must listen the sermon of Shiv-Ratri. Because of good habits, a man does good to his own self easily and quickly. Similarly, because of bad habit, his downfall becomes imminent and it becomes almost impossible to retrieve. Such is the force of habits. It appears that we have become habituated about "We read precepts; we hear discourses. but do not aet accordingly." Just think for a moment, how much horrible it is ? One who has got such a habit, is there any possibility of his redemption ? Whatever good and noble precepts he would listen or read, he cannot accept them in life, because this has become his habit. This thing is to be pondered over.

If someone becomes so much ill that whatever he eats, it comes out as it is, his family members will get worried

and rush to some able doctor to see that he gets cured soon of this fell disease. We also know the fact that in case he not cured, he is sure to die. But the greatest wonder is that most of us are suffering from this mental disease in our body and we are careless about it. Rather, we even do not know that this is such a serious ailment. We do not worry in the least though there are many people in this world, whose mental death came only due to this reason. Do you understand about this fell disease or we may call it epidemic ?

Whatever knowledge we get from discourses, precepts, etc., this is our mental and spiritual food. Those who have become habitual that they go on listening and reading but remain unaffected by it, their digestive system has become out of order. Because whatever they listen or read that enters from one ear and gets out of the other. So, in my opinion they are suffering from a fell disease; only God may help them !!!

The greatest trouble is that they are unaware of their ailment. Therefore, I may counsel you to think about it seriously and search your own self thoroughly during this month whether this fell disease has got hold of you. Once the disease is diagonosed, it will not be very difficult to remove it. God is ever helpful to us in our endeavours. If someone has got this disease, as I am sure many of the readers may have, they should first try to get rid of it. They should totally change their habit. Try hard for full one month

deliberately by reminding yourself again and again day and night that whatever knowledge you get from anywhere, do your best to bring the same in your life and the way to your well-being will be paved.

This is your first step in the right direction. Whatever you listen, you will act on it—take this decision here and now. Without this decision, all what you hear and read, most of it goes waste and useless. Not only useless, but unconsciously we form a bad habit, which may take us to perdition. Therefore, take a firm decision to leave this bad habit and with prayer to God say loudly and with full voice :

सं श्रुतेन गमेमहि मा श्रुतेन विराधिसि ॥

Whatever we listen, we make it our part; it may become our companion in life. It may never go out untouched by us. This is to accept the precept and this is our mental and spiritual food.

If we learn to accept the precept, there are precepts everywhere and in all directions for us. As Dayanand got his precept at that night from a small incident, we can also take lessons from nature, many other incidents that take place in human activities every day. God is so kind that He is bountiful and generous in giving us precepts, the only drawback is on our part that we do not listen to them. In case we begin to listen to his ever flowing messages that are divi e then the rising and setting sun tells us something; the sky glittering and studded with the stars tells us some message; the flowing rivers and the high-standing mountains, the

fluttering leaves of the trees and the gentle wind, even the ever happening incidents in the animal world, all these convey some message or the other—what actually matters is that we should listen to them.

The falling apple from the tree conveyed a message to Newton and he heard it and because of this, he became the fore-runner of the scientific world. Who has not seen things falling down from above ? But we care little and thus though looking at these events, we do not see and though hear all the time, we do not listen. Mahatma Charan Das says that he learnt the various lessons in life from twenty-four Gurus. Who were they ? Among them were-Lizard, Spider, Tree, etc., etc. Do you know what was the incident that made Mahatma Buddha real 'Buddha'. When he became very thin, because of excess penance, one day it so happened that he listened the song of a prostitute sung in an assembly held near by. The refrain of the song was that if the strings of a guitar are very tight, it does not give proper music and if these are loose, then too the instrument does not produce good sound. From this he learnt the great principle of 'par' or equality (समता), which has become a valuable part of Buddha Dharma and gave up excess penance. The people in the assembly may have been seeing the dalliances of the prostitute or satiating their ears with the songs, but Mahatma Buddha got something much more valuable from it.

On the one hand, Buddha received the message from the song of a prostitute which changed the course of his life, while on the other, we listen the discourses form Vedas from very learned pundits, yet we remain unaffected. The only reason

is that we are not ready to receive the message; our eyes and ears are not open. Therefore, from all angles the first and foremost requirement is that we should learn to get the message and be prepared for it. All other things come afterwards.

Truly speaking, Vedas are the mines of diamonds and we can get many diamonds from the life-history of Rishi Dayanand. But in case we do not learn the first thing first and do not know how to pick up the diamonds, then sitting in the middle of the piles of diamonds, we will remain poor all the same. Hence, we cannot blame anybody for all this state of affairs.

In case we have decided that whatever knowledge comes to us, we will accept the same, naturally, we would like to know the means or devices by which such knowledge or message may become a part of our life permanently. There is only one method and, I am certain, none will disagree on this count. The proper words to express the device are—"contemplation in seclusion". Whatever precept we get, we should think over it again and again in loneilness—meditate and ruminate over the discourse and its words and phrases in our mind. In this way, we can give it a permanent place in ourselves. For example, I came to know that we should always speak the truth and nothing but the truth. Then I must sit and think over it as

to how far this is correct. If this is correct, then why I am not following this in practice. What are the obstacles in my way, *e.g.*, greed and fears that force me to speak lies and what are the means to win them over ? What harm accrued to me by untruthfulness ? Where and how truthfulness is connected in my life ? And many more such questions we may raise and give a full and considered thought to these,

In this way, truth will become a part of my life. Otherwise, I may read books on truth and may never give a thought, it is not likely to come in my practical life and I am likely to remain as hithertofore. As food kept outside can have no relation with my body, similarly by reading books or listening to discourses, without giving proper thought, may hardly be useful. We must ponder over, contemplate and an individual who weighs the matter fully in his mind, for him only this much 'speak the truth' message is quite adequate. Because he will elaborate it himself and observe the same.

Many of us are addicted to reading voluminous books and listening to long and winding lectures and discourses. But if you are interested in lengthening some talk, I will suggest that you lengthen the same by contemplating and thinking on that particular topic from different angles, rather than read a big book or hear a long lecture. Because it is much bettter to ruminate over a subject in your mind and in

this way you can lecture to your own self. In reality, when we think deeply ourselves, this is what happens. Those who are not habituated to do so, whenever they get an opportunity to read any lengthy discourse, they should note some brief points of the same in their minds and in seclusion, contemplate by enlarging the brief points already there. In this way, you will be able to memorise the message or precept and it is likely to become a part of you. This is the best method to retain the knowledge or to digest your mental food, *i.e.*, contemplation in seclusion.

What is the meaning of 'seclusion' here? Often we are always influenced by the external effects, as these keep on attracting our attention and our mind remains busy thinking about these external forces. We have to do away with these external influences for some time and sit all alone in peace. This is what I mean by seclusion. By sitting alone in this condition, you can give proper consideration on your own self.

Man is solitary indeed, as there is no partnership in punishment or rewards, *i.e.*, in the results that accrue from his deeds. When we are in distress or pain, in such a condition even best well-wishers cannot help us, so long as it may not be possible according to our deeds. Therefore, man has to travel his actual path all alone. Someone else may be able to lend some help, but he has to walk himself. This, to be in seclusion, is to bring oneself in the natural condition. This is known as 'Swastha', *i e.*. to reside or sit within one's own self. This is what salvation means—to be all alone, only self. Therefore,

make it a practice to be solitary daily, seat yourself with your Atman and think about self.

This, in other words, may be called 'self-introspection'. As a businessman makes account of his profit and loss, similarly everybody should make account of his profit and loss, I am earning or losing and if after taking the account it is found that there is loss then how the loss has to be made good must be seriously considered. This can only be done through self-introspection. In the beginning, some people get puzzled because they begin to see countless faults in themselves and thinking that they have incurred irretrievable harm, they stop self-introspection. But if they continue to pursue this method and tolerate all the trouble and pain which the knowledge inflicts on their minds, they will surely get solace from within and the door to improvement and reformation will open. A day will soon come when they will begin to relish the practice of self-introspection and may not leave it for good in their life.

For contemplation in seclusion, the best time is early morning and evening. In scriptures and upanishedas we have been advised to adhere to these timings daily and from the worldly point of view also these times are most suited. If somebody is keen to remove his vices and bad habits, he can only do so by contemplating on these. He may continue to hear the discourses, but these will have little effect on his behaviour and conduct and character. If I am eager to do away with anger, then I will have to give a thought to this twice a day and see how far I have been successful. This can only be done through

checking on your daily business of life and by self-introspection. We have to take a firm decision and see that they are adhered fo by us in our daily life. This is the best way to do away with the vices and implant in their place fine qualities and virtues.

The following verse of Atharva Veda exhorts us :

देवा इवामृतं रक्षमाणाः सांय प्रातः सौमनसो वो अस्त ।।

Here we have been told—"As the gods defend their immortality, similarly you should attain to noble thinking in the evenings and mornings." The godliness of gods lies in that they are immortal, while we are mortal human-beings. But our humamity lies in good ideas and noble thoughts. मननात् मनुष्यः । We are known as 'Manushya' because we can think and this differentiates us from animals. In case Man gives up contemplation and thinking, then he cannot be called a man. This epithet becomes useless. Hence, he should keep his humanity intact by pondering over his actions twice a day at least. Those who do not give consideration to this aspect, they fall down from the pedestal of humanity. Thus, contemplation in seclusion has an important place in our life.

When a man devotes some time to giving some thought on himself, at that time he goes in his own self. This process is like entering into a castle and sit there for a while. In this way, he gets an opportunity to examine his ownself thoroughly and gets ready to fight the outer world with greater vigour. Thus he never feels defeated. It is possible that he may get

wounded in the battle of this mundane world, but when he comes back in the evening and gives proper thought to all that happened, his wounds get healed as the contemplation in seclusion works as a doctor. I for myself get much solace from such contemplation and therefore insist that the readers may also test it in their life.

In this connection, it would be better to narrate the conversation between Maharaja Dhritrashtra and Mahatma Vidur in Mahabharata. Once Maharaja Dhritrashtra asked Vidur as to what was the best way to remove all the evil propensities, that keep us tied ? Mahatma Vidur replied that the first means eradicate these evils was to do self-introspection daily for a few minutes, as it has been stated in our scriptures :

प्रत्यहं प्रत्येवेक्षेत नरश्चरितमात्मनः ।

किन्नु मे पशुभिस्तुल्यं किन्नु सत्पुरुषेरिति ।।

A man should examine his character and conduct daily to see whether I am changing myself into an animal or beast or I am following the path as shown by people of merit and virtue. This is most essential and for this very reason, we have to study the verses known as 'Samkalpa Sukta' every day, so that our mind may always be of good resolves. The rhyme with which all the verses end is :

तन्मे मनः शिव संकल्पमस्तु ।

Let this mind of mine be of good resolves. For full details about these verses, the readers are advised to read the book

'Might of Mind' by the author.

So, this is the first step in the right direction, whereby you can actually take your first step towards nobility and thus sow the seed of virtuous qualities which are likely to follow and sprout up in your future days ahead. This is more applicable to student community as they are passing through the time of their age which is most crucial in their making. Because habits formed during this period of life are going to make or mar your career. Hence, be cautious and try to understand the significance of your role in the destiny of your country.

[ 6 ]

# Be Prompt (आश्विन)

To move fast like a horse and catch up with your work and time, so that in the evening, you may feel happy and satisfied with your performance of the day and be able to sleep soundly at night, because of the tiredness of the labour you did in the course of your duty. "Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today" is a golden rule which every student must adhere to in his daily course of life, if he wants to be successful. Duty done well and in due time, not only gives you inner happiness, but also the world showers its praise because in the process, you actually follow the example of the rising sun, which shines in its glory and the world worships it. Similarly, a time comes when you will also shine and for this you have to utilise your time well, not wasting even a single minute in useless trifles. Remember, that you must value time, in case you want to be valued.

In Atharva Veda, we have been given a very valuable advice. The words are memorable.

कालो अश्वो वहति ।

The horse of time is running very fast and we have to catch up with it, otherwise as the proverb says—'Time and tide wait for nobody' we will be laid aside and forgotten. The power of time is strange and great and those who are careless and lazy on this score are generally defeated in the race. We

are now passing through a competitive world and even in order to survive, we must put in our best, lest we may have to face extinction.

The powers of time are strange and great. We have therefore to take stock of the situation and utilise every minute carefully, lest we may be found wanting when the rewards of deeds are being distributed. You cannot know, what lies in store the next moment for you. Remember that wealth lost can be retrieved again. Similarly, health lost can also be recouped. But there is no way to get back the time once gone. A minute passed is past for ever. Even gods have no power to bring it back.

Many of us do a great mistake in our life, thinking as to what is the hurry; we will do such and such work later. This is a bad habit of procrastination. Never put off till tomorrow, what you can do today. A student who does not do his daily work, but keeps it pending till the last moment, when the examination hovers over his head, finds himself at bay. Because the work becomes a big pile and he finds it impossible to cover in such a short time. He thus becomes nervous and ultimately has a poor result.

It is indeed a very BIG mistake. If you cannot do it now, how can you do it the next day, when the work will be manifold. It thus goes on increasing in volume and the habit of putting off the work will land you in trouble. A student ought to lead a regular life, like the sun and the moon, who are so very punctual in their rotation. We can take a lesson from them and make our own lives successful. This would

prove a blessing in the long run.

The time is invaluable. A little delay in a patient's life may mean his death. A minute's delay may debar you from sitting in an examination. Similarly, one may miss his train or aeroplaue, because of a few minutes' delay in arriving late. You should never forget the fact that you are the hope of the future; you are the builders of the country of tomorrow and the whole nation looks to you for succour. In case you neglect time, it means you are neglecting your ownseif.

History is replete with the life-stories of great men, who rose to greater heights, because they were watchful about time. Napoleon is one of them, who himself was very prompt and punctual. Once his Minister was late by about ten minutes. When Napoleon asked for the reason of his late coming, the Minister expressed his helplessness, as his watch was slow by ten minutes. Thereupon, Napoleon admonished the Minister, "Either you change your watch or I shall change you."

Certainly, most of you students tie a watch on your wrist. But mind you, it is not an ornament; you must understand its proper use. The 'tik-tik' sound of the watch gives you a constant warning that hard work and exertion only pay in life. Therefore let not a single minute pass by without putting it to some purposeful work. But do you heed its warning ? Some of you do not, because you reach your schools and colleges late generally. Are you quite punctual in attending meetings and do you have a definite fixed time of your daily routine, *e.g.*, of studying the different subjects, food, sleep, games, etc. If not, then the purpose of your having a wateh is lost.

The word 'watch' has two meanings, *viz.*, the device that shows time and to be careful. So, please watch your time, watch your actions, watch your words, watch your behaviour, watch your thoughts and watch your character. If you will be careful about your time, you will certainly be doing such deeds that should bring you in good esteem. By watching your words, you will never indulge in loose talk and thus your behaviour towards all will be exemplary which will make you lovable. Everybody should begin to like you and be eager to be in your company. You can in this way become an example to others. By watching thoughts, you will always shun bad ideas and would ponder over good and noble thoughts, that are likely to shape your life. Such watchfulness is going to make you a man of sterling character, the metal of which great men are made.

You must have read the following lines of a poem :

Early to bed and early to rise;<br>
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.<br>
Work while you work, play while you play;<br>
That is the way to be happy and gay.<br>
One thing at a time, and that done well:<br>
Is a very good rule, as many can tell.

Let us remember that the watchword of life is not apathy but adventure, not inertia but movement. In the words of Aitareya Brahmana :

"Movement is sweet, motion is luscious fruit, that is to

say, motion itself is the immortal fruit of movement. Observe the inexhaustible pulsating of the sun; from the very beginning of creation, it has gone on, without a day's rest. Therefore, move on, move on."

It is only during childhood and student age that the habits are formed whether good or bad. Hence, it is most essential that a student should chalk out his programme of twenty-four hours day and night and work accordingly. It would be advisable for a student to go to bed for sleeping at about ten at night and get up at about four in the morning. After finishing his daily chores of latrine, bath etc., he should devote some time for study in the morning. It is very useful, as at that time in the early morn, his mind and brain are fresh, intellect sharp and whatever he will study, will leave an imprint on his brain. He can think clearly and fresh and new ideas are likely to come to him spontaneously.

During early morning hours, fresh breeze blows and the whole atmosphere is so calm and quiet that it is mopt ideal for study. An hour's study at this time is worth many an hours during the rest of the day. You begin this practice from today onwards and see the result yourself. In this way, you will find ample time at your disposal and the general complaint of the shortage of time will vanish. Thus, you will be amazed to find that henceforth your life has become pleasant, because inner happiness and the sense of satisfaction come from doing your duty well.

'A stitch in time saves nine' is a well-known proverb and we

must instil this in our minds to fully understand its meaning, lest we may have to suffer the loss of time and money many times over for not giving proper heed to the warning it conveys. The bad habit of putting off the work for some future date and not attending to it well in time, is perilous and we should shake it off as soon as we can. We ought rather make a determined effort not to become a prey to this vile enemy. Because this proves a great hurdle and indeed very costly obstacle in life and ultimately may mean the difference between success and failure. Hence, a great caution must be observed on this score and never succumb to the temptation of rest on some false pretext. Because undue and long rest is likely to make you rusty and it is entirely up to you by being active and in high spirits, not to allow any dirt to accumulate in any dark corner of your mind.

We should never forget the fact that the world has become very much competitive these days and life has become full of struggle and only the fittest can survive in such an atmosphere. Vedas say—'वीर भोग्या वसुंधरा' । Only the brave can enjoy the pleasures of this world. The weaklings are likely to be elbowed out, as the world has no place for weak, coward and powerless people; actually they are a burden on society and the nation. A country is as much strong or weak as the number of such people and, therefore, it is most essential for the rulers to manage the affairs by adopting such measures that not even a single hand remains idle.

Man has been born in this world, not to spend his life like

other animals and birds, but to acquire as much knowledge as possible during childhood and thence put that knowledge into practical use in such a way as to make this world more prosperous and leave a better and more beautiful world behind. Hence, the necessity to keep on doing something useful to the society and if in the process you are really able to contribute worthwhile, then you will certainly make a landmark in the history of mankind. This needs constant vigilance and sacrifice on your part of your own comforts and pleasures for the good of others, without expecting any reward in return. Those who devote their lives in this manner, about them Longfellow writes :

Trust no future, however pleasant;
Let the dead past bury its dead.
Act—act in the living present;
Heart within and God overhead.

Remember 'Actions speak louder than words.' Those who only sing their own praise and do little, lose their respect and such men are ultimately discarded by the people for their insincerity and misdeeds. We have to be sincere in what we do and need not proclaim, because we are likely to be judged by our actions. The one cardinal fact which nobody should forget is that the importance of life is in action Idlers have no place in this world which itself keeps on moving without any pause. Similarly, all the stars and planets keep on moving in their spheres. Even the smallest atom is action-packed. Then, Oh Man ! how can you think of taking rest and break

the norms, laid down by God Almightly, which even the smallest particle of Nature follows. It is now an accepted fact that the existence and life of the whole cosmos depends on their movements and if they stop, catastrophe and wholesale destruction will follow. In the same way a man if idle is worse than dead. The existence of life demands that he should keep on moving and working all the time. As a matter of fact, we are always at all times doing something or the other, though we may not realise this. Therefore, why not do something useful to yourself and to others and that may also be doing your duty well in such a way that others way also get inspiration from you.

No work is big or small because even the smallest task is important in life. The routine work in our daily life has more basic value and that is why we have to do them again and again. Even otherwise, just think for a moment that every cog has a vital role to play in a big machine, without which it cannot function. Hence, obey your elders and put your heart and soul in whatever you do, as this is going to help you in your life in the long run. Idleness and procrastination are the two great enemies and we have to be ever watchful, lest these may ensnare us in their trap.

You should not be discouraged by temporary setbacks; go ahead and ahead. You must have seen quite often how a tiny bird works hard in making her nest. How carefully she carries the twigs in her beak and then places them one by one in n order. For this, she does not get tired and makes many rounds. But quite often the twigs fall down, yet she does not lose cour-

age, picks them up aguin and again and at last she is successful in that her nest is ready. So difficulties and problems are bound to arise, more so if your aim is high. Only small things can be achieved by small efforts and great tasks would certainly need great efforts commensurate with their height and greatness. Never lose courage and patience, persevere in your endeavour all the more, as a Hindi poet has said, encouraging us :

कभी निराश न होकर बैठो, कभी न दुःख में घबराओ ।
सदा कर्तव्यों का पालन करके, आगे ही आगे बढ़ते जाओ ।।

Never lose hope and get disappointed. Never he perplexed by troubles. March forward, doing your duty well. Life's path is full of thorns and weeds; you may have to face difficulties and hurdles all the way and be prepared for them. A youngman like you accepts them as a challenge and happily crosses them all in no time and makes his way clear amongst them all. He does not like to waste his valuable time in giving these any serious consideration, as in his view these are but trifles. He has to go far.

Rabindra Nath Tagore has written the following poem :

## BOON

(1) God ! Protect from adversities;
I have not come to you with this prayer.
May never be afraid of adversities;
Grant me this boon.

(2) From the sufferings of the troubled mind,
Do not beg to be pacified.
May win over my troubles;
Grant me the blessings.

(3) 'Save me' I have not come;
With this prayer at your door.
I only beg the energy and strength;
To continue swimming in the troubled waters.

(4) 'Lighten my burden' is not my prayer;
With which I have come to you.
My only prayer is that—
I may continue moving with my burden.

(5) I may be able to see you;
Even in troubled moments.
While the whole world may laugh at me;
I may never get alarmed—Grant me this boon.

I may quote here the words of a great statesman, who said that your places of duty or work are our temples and mosques, our churches and our gurudwaras; doing our duties well, honestly and sincerely is our best worship. In this connection, a story comes to my mind when a king, who was very much worried about the affairs of his State, as the administration was not doing well, approached some Mahatma for his advice in the matter. The Mahatma thought for a while and then told the king that it was quite simple. The king became happy at this and eagerly asked for the simple remedy. You know, what the Mahatma said—If all the functionaries of your State, down from a sweeper to the Minister—be he a professor, teacher or

judge, businessman or farmer, trader or customer, in short all the citizens of your State, do their duties in their respective spheres honestly and sincerely, then all the ills of your State will vanish. For this you have got to be harsh and just and punish those who are found guilty of the dereliction of duty, without favour and fear, be he your own clansman, relation or even your own son.

This sense of duty has to be inculcated in the young minds, so that they understand the importance of their work and never neglect it for one reason or the other and thus may become assets to their country.

# (7)

## Vigour (कार्तिक)

With the onset of the month, there is perceptible change in the season in that the scorching summer has receded and humid atmosphere has given way to the cool breeze of the mornings, pleasant to the body and mind that wafts our spirits high, giving the message of courage and vigour, so clear that it is not only registered on the faces of the human-beings but also visible in the sprightly activities of flora and fauna. The month is symbolic of the resurgence of the vital strength of vegetation and of the living beings. Of course, Man being the Master of this world, he exhibits the same in the festive season of Diwali, celebrated by Aryas (Hindus) on a wide scale. With the ripening of the sugarcane crop, yajnas are performed publicly in which the first yield is offered to God Almighty through fire, so that the atmosphere is charged with the sweet smell thereby making it healthful to all. The purpose of yajna (sacrificial fire) that is actually known as 'Deva-yajna' is to purify the atmosphere. Our bodies are made of the five basic elements, *viz.*, earth, water, fire, air and ether and these are called gods (Devas) and in order to purify our own bodies, we perform

yajnas as in the process these five basic elements get purified of which our bodies are made. As you all know that day in and day out the cells of our bodies are changing into new ones and if these five basic elements are purified, our own bodies will get purified automatically. So, yajna is such a wonderful deed by which we help ourselves, not only physically and materially, but in case we pay some attention to the verses that are uttered whilst performing it, our spiritual upliftment is assured thereby.

Diwali is a festival of lights and light symbolically stands for knowledge, harmony and prosperity, while darkness is considered as the abode of the evil, the bad and illiteracy. Therefore, we may also say that Diwali is a festival of the victory of good over evil. People also worship the Goddess of Lakshmi (Wealth) praying for prosperity all the year round. The curse of poverty is the worst and life becomes miserable, unbearable and useless. Hence, in order to lead a satisfactory life, the place of money or wealth cannot be discounted. Without it, it is just not possible to carry on and that is why we find generally Man stooping low because of the greed. But if we consider deeply, the meaning of the festival, *i.e.*, light representing knowledge, then it is obvious that money has to be earned, and not amassed by hook or by crook as such wealth will spell disaster in the long run.

Mainly there are three kinds of energy or vigour. The first and most important is that of body, *i.e.*, we should be healthy physically. This is quite obvious in that our life entirely depends on this factor. That is why in our scriptures, great emphasis has been laid on the maintenance of good

and sound health. शरीर माद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम् । Body is the means, through which a man progresses in life. He cannot perform his duty properly if his health is not good and he remains sickly. A person who is always afflicted by some disease or the other, can never think of doing anything worthwhile in life. Because of his pains and suffering, he at every step will find himself unable to do the task in hand.

The example of a newly born baby is a clear proof of this. Parents first of all try their best to give him milk and nourishing food, so that he grows up well and is healthy in all respects. For a few years all facilities are afforded to the child within his parents' means and their only concern is to see that he grows unhampered, *i.e.*, with all his senses normal, he becomes a healthy boy of his age. In cities and towns, even health competitions are arranged for babies and prizes given to those who come out successfully according to their standards. When the child grows to be of the age group 3—5, then only the parents think of putting the child to some school. Hence, we see that here also health comes first and schooling later.

As a matter of fact, at no stage in life one can ignore the factor of health. Because without being hale and hearty, life becomes meaningless and useless. Generally, in old age, people remain sickly and weak. But if we are careful about our daily routine and lead a life of restraint, there is little reason for us to be sickly.

A student can normally remain healthy in case he leads a regulated life. The habit of getting up early in the morning

should be formed from the very beginning and parents can be of great help in this direction. An hour or two must be devoted to studies in the morning, because during the early morning hours, mind is fresh and receptive. In all the schools and colleges, physical training instructors, games or sports teachers are appointed and a period or two allotted for games and sports. The purpose of this being that the health and physique of the children are properly maintained. Inter-school and inter-college competitions of various games and sports are arranged periodically. In olden times, education was given the highest regard and respect in the world in all the countries, but now the times have changed and we see that games and sports are not taken only as a matter of play alone, these have now become a sort of profession. The examples of cricket, football, tennis and many other games and sports is there, in which many boys and girls have excelled themselves to such a height that they have earned not only money in its wake, but also name and fame.

A Sanskrit poet has described the duties of a student as under :

व्यायामो विनयो विद्या विवेको वीर्य-रक्षणम् ।
एते पंच वकारास्युः विद्यार्थिनः युगेयुगे ॥

Daily exercise, to study politely and humbly, with wisdom and discretion and to preserve the vital fluid, semen, are the five 'Vikaras' which the students have to accept in life from times immemorial. Here, again, we find that daily exercise has been stated to be the very first duty of a student. No body can ignore the importance of health in life. In case a student has a poor health and remains sickly, he cannot be regular

in his studies either. God forbid, if he falls sick at the time of the exmination, he cannot appear in the examination and thus loses a year or two, falling behind his fellow students.

धमर्थिकाम मोक्षाणां आरोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम् । According to our scriptures, every individual must aim in life to attain the four fruits, *viz.*, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. (1) Righteousness or education and knowledge that makes one capable to discharge his duties effectively; (2) Artha—By performing the duties, we may be able to earn the required money; (3) Kama—Thus we may be able to fulfil our necessary desires; and (4) Moksha—In this way we are able to pave our way to salvation in the end. But all these can only be accomplished, when we remain healthy and quite fit to undertake the task and be able to discharge our responsibilities. All this comes down to one and the same thing and that is HEALTH, which we have described as the most important energy or vigour.

Second in importance is the vigour of education, knowledge and learning. विद्या विहीन: पशु: । A person without education is nothing more than a beast. Hence, students should make note of this and let not the golden opportunity that has come their way with God's blessings slip by, lest you may have to repent later in life.

In Hindi literature, poets and writers have extolled the virtues of education and knowledge immensely :—

विद्या के भण्डार की, बड़ी अपूरब बात ।
ज्यों खर्चो त्यों-त्यों बढ़े, बिन खर्चे घट जात ।।

The storehouse of education or knowledge has one of its unique features. The more you spend it, the more it increases. But without spending, it will decrease. How nicely the above couplet describes that education or learning needs to be kept fresh by revising or imparting to others, otherwise this will fade away.

A Sanskrit poet has sung the virtues of Vidya (education) as under :

विद्या नाम नरस्य रूपमधिकम्, प्रच्छन्न गुप्तं धनम्;
विद्या भोगकरी यशः सुखकरी, विद्या गुरूणां गुरूः ।
विद्या बन्धुजने विदेश गमने, विद्या परा देवता;
विद्या राजसु पूजिता न तु धनं, विद्या विहीनः पशुः ॥

Vidya lends beauty and charm to a man; it is the secret wealth. Vidya gives name and fame, as also pleasures of life; Vidya is the teacher of teachers. In a foreign country, Vidya is like your brother and is like God to you. Even the rulers and kings worship Vidya, and not the wealth. A man without proper education is like a beast.

Another Sanskrit scholar has described the virtues of education and learning in the following words :

न चोर हार्यं न राज हार्यं, न भ्रातृभाज्यं न च भारकारि ।
व्ययकृते वर्धंत एव नित्यं, विद्याधनं सर्वधनं प्रधानम् ॥

Vidya is such a wealth that a thief cannot steal it; even a king cannot usurp this. Vidya cannot be divided like any other property by brothers and it has no weight either'

Vidya increases regularly by being spent; hence it is the best of all the wealths in the world.

Sir P. Sydney says, "The end of all knowledge should be virtuons action." But what are we witnessing these days? विद्या ददाति विनयम् । Vidya or education bestows humility. And what are the students up to these days? Then, should we call this education? The question needs to be answered by all those who are responsible for the present system of education. It is a legacy of the Britishers and sooner we do away with it, the better. Mahatma Gandhi in his life-time emphasised the need of change-over to our own national language. The rulers have also laid down in the Constitution that Hindi will be our national language, but when it is not known. We feel so small in the eyes of the foreigners that we have no regard or respect for our own national language and the relic of our slavery, the curse of Macaulay still haunts and persists in our daily life.

सा विद्या या विमुक्तये । Knowledge or learning is that wh ch makes you free from all sorts of bondage. Can we testify this in modern times about the type of education we get? Of course, the students get degrees and diplomas, but are bereft of the necessary knowledge and learning that can enable them to face the world. Gandhiji realised this and was very keen to introduce the new system of education in own national language, making professional/vocational training essential. But nothing has been done so far and we find that most of our students after finishing their education find themseleves on the road, unemployed and frustration writ large on their faces. How can we say that it is good for

our country where the youth power is wasted in this manner ! Some drastic steps need be taken soon to remedy the situation, otherwise the future of the country is dark.

How proper education can uplift a man from lowly position to an exalted one, can be seen from the examples of many great men, like Surdas, Tulsidas, Bana-bhatt, Bhavbhuti, Swami Vivekanand, Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati and Mahatma Gandhi to quote a few of the recent past, leave alone the Great Rishis of the ancient days gone by. The story of Kalidas is a classic example, because he was a rustic fellow even when a youngman of marriageable age. He was discovered by some pundits who wanted the Raj Kumari Vidyottma's pride to crush, as she had defeated all these pundits in a challenge.

Kalidas was found sitting on the branch of a tree, cutting the same branch from where it had taken its off-shoot. Thus, they thought that such a man was the greatest fool and hence he was allured and was asked by the so-called pundits to maintain silence, whilst they manipulated with the Raj Kumari that he was a great scholar and thus got them married. Subsequently, when the Raj Kumari discovered to her dismay that she has been duped, she turned Kalidas out of the house, stating that he should only return after acquiring great learning befitting her status. So, Kalidas accepted this challenge as he took to his heart the words of his wife and in the course of a few years' time, he returned as a great scholar of his time. Because of his learning and knowledge, he became famous and ultimately he was chosen as the great poet of the Kingdom by Raja Bhoj. He wrote

many books which are well-known for their excellence. His Abhigyana-Shakuntalam is such a marvellous piece that the famous German poet Goethe described it as uncomparable in the world, as a person, whilst reading it, is transported to veritable heaven.

From the above, it is evident how an ignorant man like Kalidas had carved his name in the temple of fame, because of the vigour of his education and learning. There are many examples of this kind and the names of the two noble prize winners are known to most of us—(1) Raman, the scientist, and (2) Rabindra Nath Tagore for his exquisite piece of literature known as Gitanjali.

Third and last in importance is the vigour of money and wealth or that of the position of power, which nowadays is known as the Chair for which most of our politicians hanker ever after. But if we have the first two above described vigours, i.e., we are healthy in body and spirit and have acquired good education, knowledge and learning, the third should come to us unasked. All the same, its importance cannot be minimised these days, when on its strength, you can employ many a muscle men and educationists, who are always on your beck and call all the time. Some Sanskrit poet has drawn the picture in his shloka as under :

यस्याति वित्तं स नरः कुलीनः ;
स पण्डितः स श्रुतिमान् गुणज्ञः ।
स व एव वक्ता स च दर्शनीयः ;
सर्वेगुणाः काञ्चनमाश्रयन्ति ॥

One who is wealthy and rich, belongs to good family, he is a learned person, knowing all the scriptures and Vedas, he

is endowed with all the qualities and virtues, he is a good speaker and worthy to be seen; as all the merits live in wealth.

Everything begins with finance. It is just not possible even to carry on in this world without money. In order to maintain your body and soul together, you need the means with which you can easily afford the bare necessities of life, *viz.*, food, clothing and shelter. That is why, the proverb 'Money makes the mare go' has come into vogue. For mere existence, every one needs some money. Otherwise he is bound to perish, as we read of some people, dying because of hunger. In our scriptures, poverty has been described as the greatest curse on the earth. It has been truly said :

बुभुक्षित: किं न करोति पापम् ।
क्षीणा नरा: निष्करुणा भवन्ति ।।

There is no sin on earth which a hungry person does not commit, because such weak men become merciless. We see everyone running after money; it is a mad rat-race, as all the honest and truthful means have been given the go-bye in the process and no norms are being adhered to. Even some people are indulging in unpatriotic activities for the sake of money and unfotunately our Government of the day gives shelter to such undesirable persons. Rampant corruption is here because of the craze for money and wealth and it appears as if the Government is a party to this loot. Because those who are indulging in such activities are not apprehended, even when their crimes are exposed in the newspapers.

The author is grieved and pained to write all this. But

the fact that how a man's character goes to such a low level because of the greed of position and wealth is here before all to see and wonder !!! The lure of position and wealth has corrupted the entire party and most of the functionaries in the ruling class. These very people talk of character assassination, little realising the truth that it is impossible for anybody else to assassinate your character as the truth is bound to come out. But you yourself are responsible to assassinate your own selves and your character by your own deeds. Because whatever devious methods you may employ to hide the same, these are not going to make any dent on the minds of the people as a whole.

There is a Sanskrit shloka that tells us succinctly about these three kinds of vigour, being utilised by the two types of people :

विद्या विवादाय, धनं मदाय शक्ति परेषां पर पीडनाय ।
खलस्य साधोः विपरीतमेतत्, ज्ञानाय दानाय च रक्षणाय ।।

The bad people if educated and learned will quarrel amongst themselves on small issues and make it a point of prestige; if wealthy, they will be proud of their wealth and in case they are physically strong, they will torment the weak. But, on the other hand, good and gentle people if educated and learned, they will converse with each other to gain mor and more knowledge; if wealthy, they will help the needy by giving alms to the poor and in case they are physically strong, they will protect the weak.



Unfortunately these days we find bad people in majority,

while there is greater need for making people good and gentle, so that they help others and not trouble them or exploit them when in power and in possession of these vigours explained above. Hence, we should always have the noble feeling of helping others in any way we can, for which first of all we ourselves have to acquire these vigours and thus make ourselves capable to give light to others in order to make this world worth living.

# 8

# Leader (मार्गशीर्ष, आग्रहायण)

Month by month and step by step, an individual can attain some special qualities and greatness. In the process, he is bound to be holy and fearless, only because he has the patience to listen to the sound and worthy advice of the scriptures and Vedas, which enable him to take a noble step in life. He is ever prompt in what he does, there being no question of any flaw, he being full of vigour of the types that are mainly responsible in making a person's life successful. Thus, he steps forward and is able to lead all others, while his fellow colleagues feel hesitant in doing so. As a matter of fact, leadership is thrust upon him, as it is he who has made himself capable not only physically and educationally but also because of the fact that he is able to meet the challenge of the opportunity and time by gathering the means that are essential to run the orgnaisation he is required to head.

Having attained the three main kinds of vigour, Health Knowledge and Wealth, you are bound to have the necessary self-confidence and initiative that are most essential for leadership. Here I am discussing the subject from a very solid angle, taking into consideration the various factors

that go into making a successful leader, who can venture to advance into pastures new, and not just tread into the routinely paths followed year after year. Any leader with courage must take initiative because 'Initiativc is the pass-key that opens the door to opportunity'. There is no room for procrastination here and you have to guard against this all the time. Of course necessary precautions must be taken, so that your plans do not go hay wire. Whenever new grounds have to be broken, you should necessarily be prepared for some unforeseen hurdles and obstacles, thereby giving you ample courage to overcome them, without being ruffled in any way from your chosen mission.

Initiative has its own rewards to offer, not only in the shape of money, position or promotion, but the happiness and joy and pride that comes to his heart, cannot be measured by anything material in this world. The joy of creating a work of art or doing something far superior than others is only known to the doer. Such a person remains cheerful all the while because of the satisfaction that he gets out of his work. For him it is no more a dull routine of daily performance, but always his mental poise changes the complexion into a wonderful game because he has accepted the same as a challenge in life.

The leadership that can flourish and is most desirable in modern times of democracy is whereby you consult your f ow workers through a system of self determination and f edom, self-development, enlightenment and justice. The days of dictatorship have gone. Hence, you have to be cautious in your approach and in a friendly manner take

people along with you, in that they should ever have a feeling that you are actually doing what they want, and not what you want. Every individual may think in his or her heart that you give respect to his or her ideas. And that can only be when not a single move, howsoever small it be, is done from personal or selfish motive, but always in the interest of the people.

In Atharva Veda, there is a Sukta on leadership in which we have been told as to how one should work up to the desired goal. Exhorting us, it has been stated that God has given immense powers to Man. A man who utilises those powers in consultation with the wise people and considering himself under the guidance of that Supreme Creator Almighty, he certainly becomes more beneficent than others and is thus able to rise higher and higher. He is able to do away all his vicious habits and through reformation, not only blesses his own self, but to all those who come in contact with him. As a matter of fact, he does not live only for himself, but for others and he makes benevolence his daily business of life. Of course, even this course of life is not free from troubles as many bad and undersirable people create hurdles and obstacles and try to sway the opinion of the public against him. But he remains undaunted and does not care even if his life is sacrificed on the altar of goodness in the pursuit of his mission.

By nature, a man tries his best to go ahead in life and this he does by all means at his disposal. In this struggle he has to face his enemies also. But he goes forward through greater effort, as he knows full well that he has to strive hard

and never give up. He has to muster up all his courage and his dexterity and skill come to his rescue in circumstances, giving him the requisite lead over his fellow colleagues and compatriots. It has been stated in one of the verses in Atharva Veda that a man has the capacity to increase his knowledge and learning; he possesses all the vigour and thus making proper use of his virtuous qualities, he can forge ahead of others, giving protection and shelter to many, who are poor and weak. Thus, he makes himself worshippable and generally people look to him for guidance and help.

In this context, I am tempted to quote a Mantra from Rig-Veda :

मा स्रेधत सोमिनो ! दक्षता महे, कृणुध्वं राय आतुजे ।
तरणिर् इज्जयति, क्षेति, पुष्यति, न देवासः कवत्नवे ॥

Here our Father Almighty God addresses us—

"Oh you lovely, vigorous and wise ones ! You should never stoop so low as to be violent amongst yourselves. Be friendly and whatever you do, it should never be harmful to any, but in the common interest and good of all. Because violence is not the creed of human beings, it is that of animals and beasts. You have been blessed with wisdom and it is but meet for you to talk in a friendly spirit and sort out any points of difference with proper consideration and mutual understanding.

Remember a leader is not the one who forces others by might to follow him. Neither he can truly be called a leader who buys their willingness to follow him. A true

leader is one who is loved by his followers and fellow-beings because of his innate qualities of head and heart, under whose care the people feel safe and have all the opportunities that any human-being can aspire for. They have full freedom of expression, not only of their joys and sorrows, but also their true opinions and feel assured in their minds that under the leadership of their patron, their interests are fully looked after in a better way. Because they have full regard and respect for their leader and, if necessary, they are even prepared to lay down their life for him.

Going further, the verse says that if you want to be great you must be dexterous in all what you do. For this, you have to devise ways and means whereby through hard work and constant practice you attain perfection. Dedication and devotion are the necessary tools which can easily grant you the requisite skill. Your unflagging interest in your work and perseverance are bound to open the door to the secrecy of the master key that may acclaim your performance as exquisite and unique in its own way.

For any public worker, these are certain norms: First of all, you should love all and hate none. Those who are not good and in your opinion bad, such people deserve more to be loved, because it is this class which needs to be reformed. Just as a seriously sick person deserves greater attention of the physician, similarly a bad person needs more love of the reformer. There is none in this world who does not get thirsty, as there is no body who does not yearn to be loved. When a child's mother dies, his father marries second time; the motherless child

yearns for more love from his step-mother and if it is given to him, he becomes happy. So, the first and foremost attribute for a reformer is to love all and hate none.

Secondly, love demands service. Seek each and every opportunity to serve the needy, wherever you may be. Your service should be with love and as a passion for you, not merely for show. In case you are not doing any service for your country, it is obvious that you do not love your motherland. A mother loves the child and in tending the baby she has to sacrifice all her comforts, even food and sleep at times. She puts her heart and soul in making her child. Similarly, when a wife loves her husband, she certainly looks after him and caters to all his needs, even though she may have to undergo some difficulties.

Thirdly, you have to give the right ideas, correct thoughts, noble and virtuous, as these are helpful in making an individual a person of magnificent character. Thoughts are things. A man is but what his ideas are, मननात् मनुष्यः । The students of my country are the offsprings of the great Rishis, who were magnificent in their ideas and approach. In our veins runs their blood. They are now being given wrong and vicious ideas and thoughts, as a reult of which they begin to do evil things. The world can be reformed and set right only through the powerful means of good, noble and virtuous thoughts, contained in the Vedas, which are also divinely in nature. But unfortunately, we are heading in the wrong direction by aping the Western culure and naturally the result cannot be otherwise than what we are witnessing in the Western world.

For attaining greatness, we have to increase our power of the soul. We should not forget the fact that our soul is divine and the more divinely knowledge we get, the more powerful we become. It is such a power that cannot be suppressed by any brutal force. A man may be strong physically, but in case his character and moral fibre are not good, then he becomes a coward when comes face to face with any honest and truthful person. When our conscience or soul (आत्मा) is awakened with the light of the divine knowledge, we get unlimited power and the word 'impossible' has no meaning for us. Because in suchamoment of divine awakening, we rise to such a height of glory that the seemingly impossible deeds become possible and the world looks in awe and wonder, considering such souls as the incarnation of divinity or that of Gods, little realising that this divinity resides in you and me, nay in all of us, in our strong character and the world bows before such a person.

So please develop your spiritual force and this is only possible through moral bearings, *i.e.*, you have to be careful in all your dealings, in your day-to-day work in that you can come out clean before your own Atman. For this there are four simple norms that you have to adhere to scrupulously. They are आहार-व्यवहार-विचार-आचार। Your food should be not only pure, but self-earned and vegetarian. It should never be at the cost of others, pain and suffering in any way. Your behaviour with others should be not only friendly and attractive, but truthful and honest. Similarly, your ideas and thoughts should not only be pure, but noble and virtuous, so that the actual interests of all be served. Lastly, your character ought to be excellent in the real terms of the word and not

according to the definition of the modern times ! These are the four pillars on which the palace of humanity's foundation is laid and we all have to be watchful, in case we are all eager to be called human-beings. By adhering to these four norms, anyone can have the necessary spiritual power, which does not bend before any might.

According to the verse quoted above, such persons are able to swim across this worldly sea and are also in a position to help others in doing so. Because of these sterling qualities, moral fibre and spiritual force, they serve the purpose of a boat to others and help them to cross over the deep seas in which most of the people drown. This is possible because such people have no flaw in their moral character. But most of us are being vanquished daily by our own faults and foibles, being trapped by lust, passion, greed, anger, infatuation, pride, laziness, and so on. Those who are able to master these vices, they actually serve their own ends and that of many others and in this way are able to give them life which is worth living.

In the end, the verse states that people endowed with divine qualities and virtues never indulge in undesirable activities under any circumstances. They may have to sacrifice their life fighting against the evil forces, but they are as firm as a rock in their resolves of honesty and truthfulness, unlike the modern sages and saints, who don saffron clothes in order to hide their evil deeds and, in the guise of Godsmen, deceive the ignorant and simple folks, to serve their own selfish ends. As a matter of fact, for actually divine saints, clothes matter little, nor the show of their saintliness. What

really matters for them is simplicity; they avoid ostentations of all kinds and do not want to come into limelight. Such noble souls also avoid meeting persons in politics or in the position of power. Because for them, even name or fame have no value whatsoever. Indeed actual sages shun their company because they are fully aware of the fact that most of the politicians are incorrigible and are power drunk, as they consider themselves super-human.

Such people, whether they are politicans, or the so-called Godsmen, forget the eternal truth that there is a Supreme power, whose justice is immutable and none can escape His gaze, whatsoever methods you may adopt. You may be able to devise ways and means to deceive the people, but you are in a delusion if you think that you can even deceive the Almighty-Alseer God. Nobody can escape the punishment or reward according to his merit. This is not only a divine truth, but most rational and scientific as well. Because the theory of cause and effect works here also. Hence, the best way is the most simple and straight and one must follow it without being too clever in so far as life's enigma is concerned. Do good and reap good and that is what our scriptures ordain. How beautiful and heavenly this world would have been if all the politicians throughout the world in all the countries would have realised this basic truth.

Summarising the chapter on leadership, I may emphasise that the most important qualities which any good leader should possess are : self-confidence, moral ascendancy, self-sacrifice, paternalism, fairness, initiative, decision, dignity and courage. He should be ever-ready to stand up to any good

and moral cause, without considering the struggle he may have to launch and the sacrifice he may have to make in order to uphold the dignity of his mission. He must have accurate knowledge and his approach be exact. He should be able to impart that knowledge to others, so that his reputation becomes so well-known to all that when faced with any difficult situation, people may come seeking his aid and help for giving them the right directions. As a leader, it is your duty to come to the rescue of all those who are in difficulty. You must also be magnanimous in praising the deserving ones and due credit must be given to those who have actually earned the same.

Never slight any person but give everyone due respect, if you want that they should respect you. Habitually, we must be cosiderate, courteous and sympathetic and, above all, we should do all this from heart, with feeling and understanding. Of course, initiative and decision are the hallmarks of a leader. In case of any setback or even failure, one must have the moral courage to own his mistake, if it be so. In public matters, one must be honest to the core and a leader's personal integrity must be above board. If necessary, you may at times spend from your own pocket and not charge the same from public account, as this in turn will certainly enhance your prestige. Moreover, no sacrifice is great for the mission to which you are wedded. What is money after all, about which most of the people tarnish their image !

# 9

# Nourisher (पोष)

We all know and accept the fact that God created this world and He has been kind and He has blessed us with all the things in life that we need through our mother earth, which has in her womb all what we want. Now, it is up to us to get these according to our needs. But we should not be greedy and whatever we are able to get, we should eat it after distributing amongst all, as it is not our property, it is God's gift and He wants that all the living beings should get their due share, so that none may starve. So, we see God is the greatest Nourisher and in our own small way, we should copy Him, who is our Father. Unfortunately, Man has forgotten this basic and simple fact and considers himself the master and owner of whatever wealth, property, etc., he is able to acquire in this world. At the most, we may call ourselves trustees of all what we have and, therefore, its proper utilisation should be our aim, not that we usurp it for our own selfish ends. This is downright ungratefulness towards our own Creator ! In Vedas, God has been called 'Hiranya-garbhah', *i.e.*, all the riches and wealth are hidden in His womb, whether it be material or spiritual. Hence, there ought to be no doubt in our minds that all whatever we have is due to His kindness and therefore for proper utilisation of *all*, and not just of the few.

There are many verses in which God has been called ,Pusha', *i.e.*, He is our Nourisher. In Rig-Veda to last

words of a verse are—पूषा विधतः पासि नृत्मना । Oh you Nourisher ! with your power, you nourish your devotees. In many Mantras there are prayers stating that we may have wealth that may nourish us, and not that be the cause of our destruction. You may as ask to how wealth can become the cause of destruction. It does and we are witnessing this daily in our life. Here I may give a very famous and glaring example from Mahabharata. The Kurukshetra War between Kauravas and Pandavas which was responsible for such a large-scale destruction not only in the shape of massacre of human-beings, but all the knowledge and learning of our ancient culture, arts and science perished altogether. The cause of this destruction was that Duryodhana did not agree to give even five villages to Pandavas, who actually were the rightful heir to the throne. We see every day in the Courts, brother fighting against his own brother. In almost all the towns, robberies and thefts are committed daily and in most of the cases, the owners of wealth are murdered. Newspapers are full of cases of feuds and quarrels all over the places and you must have noted that the root of all this dissension is nothing but the means of nourishment, *i.e.*, wealth.

The exact meaning of a Mantra in Yajur-Veda is—We invoke Him, Who is the Lord of all the immovable and movable objects, Who is the inspirer of all our intellects, the Supreme Ruler, so that we may seek shelter in Him, who promotes our welfare, is protector, preserver and infallible, for increase in wealth—material and spiritual.

Similarly, in another verse of Yajur-Veda it has been stated—May, He, the illustrious Lord of wealth and

knowledge, source of all creative energy, saviour, fountain-head of all brilliance and glory, support of the entire universe, bring peace to us.

In another Mantra in Rig-Veda, we pray to Him—Oh you, the Nourisher and Supporter of all ! one who is a great sinner, is a tyrannical oppressor and is the usurper of our wealth as it is impracticable to serve him, such a wicked rascal, may you God remove him from ruling over us. It is a splendid prayer because if the rulers of any country are not good, noble and virtuous and are selfish, not caring for the welfare of its citizens, such a country is bound to perish sooner or later.

In Sam-Veda, it has been stated that an individual who is able to take along with him many others for earniug wealth and is not greedy, he gets noble children in his family. We see such examples in Parsis and in Marwaris. Parsis and Marwaris have adopted it as a custom in their community that anyone who is not so well-off, is given assistance by them so that he may be able to begin his business, by contributing a small sum from each family. In this way a large sum of thousands is collected and is given to him, with which he is able to make a good start. The rulers can similarly take a leaf out of it and give the necessary training to the poor and needy, so that they may be able to stand on their own legs ultimately.

No doubt, anyone who does so, has to make some sacrifice for helping others. But such a deed makes the life of our fellow human-beings worth living and they are able to resettle peacefully. This is the divine work of God.

and whosoever undertakes to share it according to his limited capabilities, is able to get the divine blessings of God, in that such a person is gifted with good off-springs, who are always at his beck and call. May God give us such inclination and we may be always ready to do our best to help our down-trodden and backward brethren.

As the Sun is the source of all our energy, similarly God is the primary source of all our breathing power and it is this power that makes our life successful. In the absence of this vital power and strength, life has no meaning. When God is within our hearts, we glow radiant and move from place to place performing the various deeds. Oh Omniscient God ! You nourish us with all sorts of knowledge and learning and thus provide us with intuition and understanding. No doubt, we have to work hard for it because you only help those who help themselves. This is your eternal law and idle or lazy persons cannot attain anything in this world. God is Almighty as there is no limitations for Him. He provides us with comforts and happiness in abundance. There is no wish which is not fulfilled by God ! But He does not just fulfil our wishes. He propels us to work for the same and in the process we get name and fame besides. In this way, we get our share and because we work hard for it, we become strong all the same.

Being active, having discarded all idleness and procrastination, the result is that we engage ourselves in noble tasks, attain knowledge and experience and are thus able to get the actual benefit of nourishment. In the end, we become meritorious, thus deserving the blessings of God. Having

had plenty of experience we come to the conclusion that to remain engrossed in worldly pleasures, is no good. Because such a life has made us proudy and weak. Hence, we pray to God that our souls be awakened, so that we become humble and strong. The vital energy and nourishment are responsible not only for our own well-being, but goad us to sacrifice our time and money and and all for the happiness and welfare of all. In this way we beome noble and attain the divine qualities.

All our friends and well-wishers, including our parents and Acharyas, have their limitations and therefore they can only assist us to that extent. It is through Nature that God is providing us with all sorts of nourishment after all. He is Omnipotent and Supreme and by His nearness we may also be able to attain some of His divinity. This is but natural and we have to work for the same. For this, we have to conserve our energy and vital fluid, as we get sanctified and become pure. Such a devotion makes us strong and fills our life with joy and happiness. One who leads an austere life is able to drive away all the obstacles from his path and is able to crush all his passions, moving towards divinity day by day.

In this connection, an episode from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's life comes to my mind. His whole life was a saga of struggle, full of battles and wars with the Mughals whom he wanted to drive away from our Motherland. Because the policy of the Mughal emperors was tyrannical and they forcibly converted Hindus to Muslims, Shivaji raised his own Marahatta army of devoted and brave soldiers and fought many battles with the Mughal armies.

He was able to capture quite a large portion of the country and many forts from the Mughals. In those days, when he was getting a fort built on which thousands of people were employed, an idea crossed his mind—"He was giving work to thousands of people and was thus responsible for their food and nourishment." This was indeed an idea of vanity !

Just at that very moment. Samarth Guru Ramdas came there and was able to guess as to what was passing in the mind of Shivaji. As soon as Guru Ramdas seated himself, Shivaji touched the feet as was his custom. Guru Ramdas pointed out to Shivaji a large block of stone lying nearby and asked him to get the same broken to pieces. This was done instantly and lo ! in the middle of the stone, there was a small cavity in which some insects were living and they began to crawl. Guru Ramdas asked Shivaji as to who was feeding the insects inside the stone ? Shivaji at once understood the underlying idea of the question and begged forgiveness for his vanity. This small episode tells us that basically God is the Nourisher of all living-beings on this earth. And whatever little we are able to do in helping others, we should not be proud, but feel more and more humble, as it is all because of His blessings that we are also able to do a bit. Actually, it is His bounty and we just become a medium, all because of His grace.

There is a proverb in Hindi—नेकीकर कुएं में डाल। It means that' give charity or help others and forget it at once. But in case you expect something in return, then it is not charity nor help, it becomes simple business. Even

to advertise that you have done this or that, given so much in charity and help to others, is not desirable. Some people even say that you must be so much self-effacing in this regard that when your right hand gives something, your left hand should not know about it. Take the example of God, who is formless and that is why many people say that we have done this, we have done that. How God comes here in between ? But the fact is that it is all because of His grace, yet he remains unseen all the while. Similarly, good people do all what they can to help others, but ever eager to remain unknown, so that the receiver may not feel small in their presence. They fully understand the feeling of human dignity. So, He is the Greatest Nourisher of all and if we are also able to do so, it is our duty which we should discharge to the best of our ability in the most humble manner.

Rahim was a Nawab and it was his daily routine in the morning to give alms to the needy and poor. As a custom, he made a heap of the rupees, coins, etc., and he used to give to each one fistful of these, without raising his eyes even on the receiver. Therefore, he did not see who was the recipient of the alms he used to give. One day it so happened that famous poet Gang was also present and he saw that a certain beggar had taken alms twice or thrice, but Rahim gave him all the same because, as stated earlier, it was his habit not to see in the face of any at that time. Seeing this, Poet Gang asked :

सीखे कहां नवाबजू देनी ऐसी देन ।
ज्यों-ज्यों कर ऊंचे उठे, त्यों-त्यों नीचे नैन ।।

Oh Nawab ! from where have you learnt this habit of giving alms; because your hands rise higher as your eyes go downward. But Rahim, who was also a poet of repute, replied as under :

देने हारा और है, जो देता दिन रैन ।
लोग भरम हमपै करें, तासों नीचे नैन ।।

Someone else is giving, *viz*., God, and He has been giving day and night. But people think that I am giving; hence my eyes are downcast. What a humility ! Rahim is remembered to this day for his qualities of head and heart; above all of humility. His couplets are quite well known and many of them are also prescribed in the text-books of schools and colleges.

As a matter of fact, to me there appears to be a thread going all through. We get nourishment from others and in turn we give the same to many. So, it is just a continuous process of give and take and in the Vedic language, this is known as Yajna. In Gita, Bhagwan Krishna says—

अन्नाद् भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्न संभवः ।
यज्ञाद् भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्म समुद्भवः ।।

All the living-beings are borne from grains or food and rains are the cause of the production of grains and rains are caused by Yajnas and the Yajna is produced by our actions. So it is a circle that goes on, that may be termed as the circle of creation. And one who does not act or behave ording to this norm, *i.e.*, he does not work as laid d wn in the Vedas and scriptures such a person spends his

sinful life in lust and passions of his senses and organs; his life becomes useless and worthless.

The purpose of an individual's life is not only to fend for self and his limited family. So much even an animal or bird has to do and we see every day in our life that they are doing so, because they have not been gifted with the powers that a man possesses. Maharja Bhartrihari has described in a shloka the difference between Man and other creatures as under :

आहार निद्रा भय मैथुनं च, सामान्यमेतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।
धर्मों हि तेषामधिको विशेषो, धर्मेण हीना पशुभिः समाना ।

Food, sleep, fear and sexual intercourse are alike for all the creatures of the world, including Man; but only Dharma is the speciality of Man and if he is devoid of Dharma, then a man is just like a beast or animal. And what is Dharma ? True knowledge and understanding comes from right education and learning, as it has been truly said विद्या विहीनः पशुः । An uneducated person is just like an animal. So long a person's vision remains limited to self, how can he be termed human-being in the true sense of the word. Besides, he must also earn the capability to be able to do something for others as well and that is what we may say that he is nourishing all those who seek his help.

Vedas lay great emphasis on this aspect of life, as stated in the following **Mantra** of Rig-Veda :

मोघमन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेता सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत् स तस्य ।
नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं केवलाघो भवति केवलादी ।।

A foolish person, having little understanding, tries to get food and wealth, without doing anything in return. Such a person only invites death in the shape of food and becomes the cause of his own destruction. Because in this way, he does not nourish any learned or gentle friend who may be in difficult circumstances. Hence such a person who eats alone, eats sins only. In other words, it is down right sinful to be selfish as to eat alone; one should share his meals with others. After giving food to all those in your company, you should peacefully take your own meals—this is our traditional Vedic way of life.

Khalil Jibran has written a very interesting story—"One late night some people came to a small roadside hotel, where they ordered food and drinks, ate and drank to their fill till mid-night. They paid the bill and when they were about to go, the hotel-owner said to his wife, "If such customers may frequent our hotel daily, our business will prosper and we will be lucky." The man who had paid the bill, hearing this, said—"Pray to God that our business may shine and in that case we will be visiting your hotel daily." Both the hotel owner and his wife replied, "Yes, we will certainly pray." But soon the hotel-owner thought and asked—"What is your business ?" The reply he received shocked him. The customer replied—"We dig graves for the dead." The business of grave-digging could only prosper if more and more people died.

Now think for a moment; all the business and professions that are being conducted these days from which huge profits accrue, are not similar. If those grave-diggers would have

been dacoits, robbers or thieves, or doing black-marketing and smuggling, taking and giving bribes in income-tax, sales-tax, property-tax, etc., selling fake medicines or doing adulteration, charge commissions on defence weapons and equipment and on the business done between the two countries stealthily, would they have been in any way better off? Any business in which public good is sacrificed for the sake of selfish ends is no better than grave-digging is done honestly and sincerely, it is indeed a great service. But in our country, while we read so much in the news, about rampant corruption in almost all the departments of the Government and semi-Goverument bodies we also read, how the contractors selling wood for funeral pyres are selling damp, wet and underweight pyre-woods for the funeral of the dead and how the aggrieved relatives of the dead persons are being cheated, with the connivance of the Government agencies and the politicians in power.

There appears to be no downward limit to which the character of our ruling class has gone. Hence hypocrisy rules supreme. There is no law and order and the public is being exploited, by keeping them ignorant and illiterate. It is more so, as our own language in not being given proper place in the working of the administration. The foreign language rules supreme and it is not followed and properly understood even by those who are its protagonists. Because for every interpretation, the help of the advocates and courts is being sought. Then how can the ordinary masses know all about its intricacies? Such a course serves the purpose of these selfish politicans, by keeping the public in dark and ignorant about their misdeeds, when according to our Vedic concept, a ruler is considered as the true representative of God, but

only when he considers his subjects like his own children and is able to look after and provide nourishment to all.

In the end, I must appreciate the work being done by all those institutions in the field of nourishment not only with food but also giving the children the necessary education, knowledge and learning, that are engaged in such service free of cost. These are Gurukulas, Pathshalas and many schools, providing all the facilities to the orphan and poor children. This indeed is the most noble task and all those organisations, which are doing social work, must share the responsibility and the Government at the Centre as also in the various States should open more and more such institutions by channelling the funds in this direction, if they are really eager to remove illiteracy from our country.

# 10

# Indra/King of Gods (माघ)

Who is Indra or the King of Gods ? According to the Vedic concept, the meanings of Indra are many and the important amongst these are : (1) God, (2) Atman, (3) Sun, (4) Lightning, (5) King, Monarch, Ruler or any rich and wealthy, person, (6) Chief or leader of the learned people.

Let us first of all consider Indra as God. He is Almighty, the Creator and Nourisher of us all. Man, being His supreme creation, has been termed as the immortal son of God. Hence, it is proper for Man to emulate his father to some extent. So, all actions of man should be creative. He should be able to nourish as many living-beings as possible. This is how a man can emulate God. You may similarly think and find out the right method of emulating God and great personages. Such a course is bound to make you great also, to the extent you are able to do so in your life honestly and truly.

The second meaning of Indra is Atman and we are all Atmans. This epithet of Atman is more manifest in the form of Man, who with his intellect and understanding can do whatever he can. Because atmans in the form of animals and birds are not endowed with such powers, hence they are captives and have to suffer, while Atmans in the shape of man have been given full independence to live as they like, by utilising their intellect properly and make this world heavenly, not only for the human-beings, but also for

all the living-beings. This fully depends on Man's character, his unselfish nature and proper understanding of the position about the material cause of the universe, self and God. For his selfish ends, if Man continues to behave as he is doing now, he will have to repent, because such a course will bring the doom nearer.

The third meaning of Indra is Sun, who is our life source and as is well known to you all, our earth revolves round the Sun. It is all because of the Sun's magnificent light and unique powers that all the living-beings on our planet are able to get their sustenance. It is the Sun that is directly responsible for our nourishment. His wonderful rays make the clouds and rains possible, as a consequence of which we are able to get the vegetation, flowers and fruits. All the forests, bushes, greenery, grass, etc. owe their existence to the powers of the Sun and even the Moon gets its light from it, which in turn gives juicy nectar to the flower, fruit and vegetation world. The days, nights and the varied seasons round the year are because of the Sun, the Moon and the Earth's circular movements. They regularly move in their own spheres, like many other countless planets and stars.

The fourth meaning of Indra is lightning and its brilliance is without par and incomparable. We generally see the lightning in the clouds, making its zigzag appearanee in a flash like mercury. The lightning has its role in causing the rains from the clouds. Besides, it is very powerful and during the rainy season, the lightning strikes some objects, due to which many lives are lost. The electric flash that the lightning causes is generally followed by thunder. As a precautionary measure, lightning conductors in the shape

of metallic rods are fixed on buildings, so that these may escape from destruction by the lightning. It is said that when the clouds clash, the lightning appears as a friction and causes the heavy downpour of rains.

The fifth meaning of Indra is a king or ruler. Obviously, such a person is vested with the powers that are necesssary for administering a country or nation. Whatever be the system of administration, someone is chosen to undertake this onerous task and the adage—'Worry lies the head that wears a Crown' aptly describes the duties and responsibilities of such a person. The better one is able to fulfil this role, the more one is re spected. What matters most is that the person who is chosen for this onerous task should be well-versed in the affairs and problems of the nation, unselfish by nature and of impeccable character. The person should be sagacious enough to be able to select his team of advisers, ministers, etc., who ought to be noble and virtuous and learned. Above all, such a person and the members of his team ought to be humble, honest and truthful in the service of the nation and the powers vested in them should not go to their head.

There are many verses in the Vedas, wherein a king has been told as to how he should carry on his day-to-day business in life. For an elected ruler, he should ever keep this in mind that he has been chosen by the nation. Hence, his behaviour ought to be worthy of a people's representative. All his policies should aim at the well-being of the people as a whole, so that the masses may like him. He has to endear himself by being available to one and all at all times, not that he may become scarce to his own subjects.

Oh Rajan ! The people as a whole may accept you .

you only to govern. If the public is not agreeable to your continuing in the chair, you are sure to be divested of it. Therefore, be cautious in your approach and keep all sections of the people satisfied; none should feel the pinch of injustice and want. The wealth of the nation must be utilised in the welfare activities of the people, and not squandered on useless trifles.

Majority of the people in your realm should be such who perform Yajna daily. Our ambassadors and envoys to foreign countries ought to be not only wise and learned, but astute. In your kingdom or reign, the women ought to be given due respect and regard, so that they may be able to maintain their character and the children be meritorious. If you are able to manage the affairs of the State in this way, you are likely to be presented with precious gifts. Otherwise, you will receive only the curse of the people.

A ruler must possess valour and wealth both and he should always devote his attention in the service of the nation. It is through his deeds that he is going to be recognised by his people. No self-praise is any substitute, because your policies and actions will speak for themselves. It is proper for the rulers that they should have their advisers who are learned, considerate, sober, wise, philosophers, and above all men of sterling character, prepared to sacrifice their all in the service of the nation. The rulers must be cautious in not giving place to flatterers and sycophants, as such people are certain to bring the doom soon.

Similarly, in Sam-Veda, it has been explained in one of the verses that a ruler or king must organise the affairs of

his State in such a way so that because of poverty or want, any of his subjects may not have to resort to sinful action. Every hand must be able to get the job, according to his merit. For this, the education and training of the children and young generation be properly planned, so that they may not have to worry on this score. At least, the basic necessities of life should be within the reach of one and all. To-day, we consider that the basic necessities of life are (1) Food, (2) Clothing, and (3) Shelter. Though even these are not available to about half the population in our country, yet for any civilised society, health and education and proper employment cannot be ignored. After a long period of forty years since Independence in which about two generations have passed of about twenty years each, where are we now ? There is a great chasm between 'Haves' and 'Have-nots' and a large majority of the people have to suffer because of the misrule, rampant with corruption, in all wings of the Government. The situation is becoming worse day by day for the poor and down-trodden, as the policies of our rulers are responsible for the ri e in prices; thus the basic requirements of life are becoming beyond the reach of the common man.

The role of the rulers in the ancient times was such that the people were happy and prosperous, as the wealth of the nation was evenly distributed. That is why Gandhiji throughout his life spoke about Ram-Rajya, as he said—"Without control over self, you cannot hope to have good self-government." In Vedas the virtues of brahmacharya have been described in great detail, as can be seen from the following verse of Atharva-Veda :

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं विरक्षति ।
आचार्यो ब्रह्मचर्येण ब्रह्मचारिणमिच्छते ।।

A king or ruler has full control over his passions and all the worldly desires. It is because of the austerity and penance that he is able to protect his country and the nation over which he rules. Similarly an Acharya keeps the brahmachari under his control because of his self-restraint and character and is thus able to make him follow suit.

Again, in another verse, it has been stated that a ruler should also be a brahmachari; as such he gets special respect from the people. A king who has control over his desires and passions gets all respect and reverence from his people as he can truly look after the interests of his subjects selflessly.

'यथा राजा तथा प्रजा' is a Sanskrit quotation. It means that 'as is the king, so are the subjects'. Here I am reminded of a king, known as Ashwapati in the Vedic era, who told the Rishis, when they declined to take food in his palace, because they thought that royal food is tainted with Rajsik and Tamsik qualities and this was going to adversely affect their pious lives, as under :

न मे स्तेनो जनपदे न कदर्यो न मद्यपः ।
नानाहिताग्निर्नाविद्वान् न स्वैरी स्वैरिणी कुतः ।।

In my entire kingdom, there is no thief, no miser person either; there is no individual fond of any intoxicant and there is none who does not perform yajna; there is none illiterate either. Besides, there is no adulterer, then how can there be any adultress. This kind of character of the whole nation was found in those days.

In his famons book Manusmriti, Maharaja Manu has written :—

एतद्देश प्रसूतस्य सकाशादग्र जन्मनः ।
स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेरन् पृथिव्यां सर्वमानवाः ।।

All persons of the world should sit at the feet of the Brahmanas of this country and take lesson on character. But where are we now ? We have travelled from heaven to hell during this interval. Honesty and truthfulness have been banished from our country; corruption and bribery are rampant. We read the happenings of scandals almost daily; cases of rape, dacoity and murder are increasing day by day. And those whose duty it is to protect the people from injustice and maintain law and order are themselves indulging in this game of loot. Good people being few in number are helpless, more so as the ruling class belong to the tribe of evil-doers. Hypocrisy rules supreme these days, as wicked people roam in the guise of saints.

Mahakavi Kalidas in his famous book Raghuvansha has described the glorious manners in which the monarchs of Raghu family ruled in that golden age, as under :

प्रजानां विनियाधानाद्रक्षणाद् भरणादपि ।
स पिता पितरस्तासां केवलं जन्महेतवः ।।

In this couplet, it has been stated that Raja Dilip had made proper arrangements for the education of his subjects, thereafter employment or work according to their ability and capacity; protection and supply of food, clothing, etc. Thus the people lived a happy life. The king was indeed the father of his people; others were known as fathers only because the had given birth to them.

The words 'Indra' and 'Maghavan' have been used in the Vedas quite often, meaning thereby God Almighty. But as indicated earlier, these can also be interpreted differently according to the context. Having gone through all the Vedas, I found that in particular the word 'Indra' has been used

thousands of times. So, even if we pray to God, calling Him 'Indra', it certainly behoves us to imbibe our Father's qualities and by over powering all our senses and controlling our minds, we can certainly acquire the virtues and thus become Indra ourselves.

We pray to God as per the verse of Rig-Veda—'Oh Lord of the riches and wealth! May you bless us with the auspicious prosperity, May you Indra! confer on us the necessary inspiration, dexterity and good luck. Kindly bestow on us abundance of wealth, welfare of body, sweetness of speech and a happy day.

The right knowledge, dexterity and efficiency all these make us fully aware about our aim and objective in life. What are our capabilities? How many companions we have? The work in hand is within our grasp and what are our means to achieve the same? Mahatma Chanakya has said—कार्यानुरूपः प्रयत्नः। We must endeavour according to our aim. It has been stated in Niti-Shastra that these things must be borne in mind before launching on any programme:

कः कालः कानि मित्राणि, को देशः को व्ययागमौ।
को वाहं का च मे शक्तिः, इति चिन्त्यं मुहुर्मुहुः॥

What is the time, whether it is appropriate? How many friends or supporters are there? Which country or place is this? What are the means of income and expenditure? How much capability I possess? If these aspects are considered and weighed fully, the work is sure to be completed without much difficulty.

It is just not possible to have glory and opulence without a healthy body. Therefore, it is inevitable to possess a trouble-free body along with the riches and wealth. The

means to opulence is business or trade. In business or trade, it is most essential to be soft-spoken and talk sweet words. Because sweet behaviour is a sure guarantee to success in business. Those who possess the above mentioned qualities and traits should have auspicious days all the while.

In Rig-Veda, there is a very famous Mantra :

इन्द्रं वर्धन्तोऽप्तुरः कृण्वन्तो विश्वमार्य्यम् ।
अपघ्नन्तोऽराव्णः ॥

Here we have been advised to increase the influence and powers of Indra—the meanings of Indra have been given in the beginning of this chapter. In so far as the first two meanings of God and Atman (Soul) are concerned, it is clear that by so doing, we will be increasing our own power and strength. Thus, by imbibing the virtues of divinity and Godliness, the human race will actually become the rightful heir of his Father and will certainly have the spiritual force, without which the mankind is drifting downwards. As regards the remaining four meanings are concerned, *viz.*, Sun, Lightning, Ruler and Chief amongst the learned ones, the power and influence of the Sun and the Lightning can be made conducive and beneficial by performing yajnas and that of the Ruler and the learned ones by giving them due respect, if they are really noble and virtuous.

The second part of the advice is that having accomplished the above-mentioned deeds to a large extent, most of us thus become competent enough to impart this knowledge and learning to others, thereby making all the world good, having changed the entire humanity into civilised gentle folk. But the fact that we have to fulfil the first condition ourselves is not to be ignored under any circumstances. Because only a burning lamp can burn many other lamps; so only a really learned man of character with zeal and unselfish nature can competently diacharge these duties satisfactorily.

Last and the third advice in the Mantra is that we must kill all our bad and evil tendencies; do away with everything that which is not considered desirable. Really speaking, the kernel of righteousness is that Man must discard the evil habits and in their place have noble and virtuous ones. For this, we have to be unselfish through and through little caring for the material benefits ever looking for opportunities where we can help the needy and the poor as much as possible by showing them the right path; giving them the required knowledge and understanding, so that they may themselves acquire the capacity to protect their own interests in the long run. The Vedic philosophy lays great emphasis on this point that man should be broad-hearted and never greedy or miserly. As all the riches and wealth belong to the nation as a whole, and to the chosen few who have usurped the same by hook or crook. Hence, it has to be utilised properly and distributed amongst the entire populace according to their needs.

This is the country, known as the Golden Bird, where milk and honey used to flow in abundance. What is the condition now, I need not recount, as you all know and experience it in your daily life. Mahatma Gandhi advocated throughout his life that the rulers should live as simply as a common man. But the life-style of our Ministers with all the pomp and ostentation surrounding them far outpaces the colonial rulers of the past. Now, they are so much afraid because of their misdeeds that they dare not move in public and crores of rupees is being spent on their security alone, which the public has to pay for their misrule! These politicians have no self-respect whatsoever. They do not listen to the voice of their conscience. It is doubtful whether they have any soul, because from their bad actions and misdeeds, it appears as if they are soul less. So, what sort of Indra our rulers are ? They are only manipulating things in such a way as to continue in the saddle, holding the reins of the country. And this is their worry all the while.

# 11

## Austerity (फाल्गुन)

Although whatever has been written in the previous chapters not only point towards the direction of becoming a perfect person, you must have seen that all the qualities and virtues require constant vigilance and to devotedly practise austerity and penance in order to be Indra in the real sense of the word. In Hindi or Sanskrit, it is called as 'Tapa' or 'Tapasya'. You must have heard and read how our ancestors in ancient times used to do penance and adhere to austerity in their life. Even kings and monarchs were greatly enamoured towards this mysterious and wonder-working principle, because they were fully convinced in their minds about its efficacy. They knew that austerity and penance could open the door to any problem and the tasks considered almost impossible, were accomplished through this magic wand. Indeed the powers of austerity are grand and immense.

First of all, let us discuss as to what is 'Tapa' or austerity ? It has been described in many ways. In 'Mahabharat' Maharaja Yudhishthira has stated—तप: स्वधर्मवर्त्तित्वम् । To do one's duty constantly, without caring for difficulties, is 'Tapah'. This is a very simple and straightforward definition. But if we go deep down into its working, we will find that it is the key to success in life. Because the word 'duty' connotes much more than what we generally think. Certainly it means that we have to be prepared for all the ups and downs—कार्यं वा साधयेयं, देहं वा पातयेयं । Either we have to complete the task in hand or lay down our

life in the process. It is a great challenge that we have to accept in right earnest. Such a resolve will melt all the problems from your way and even the high standing mountains are sure to give you way. In this context, see what a Sanskrit poet has to say :

यस्य कार्यन्न विघ्नन्ति शीतमुष्णं भयं रतिः ।
समृद्धिरसमृद्धिर्वा स वै तापस उच्यते ।।

The individual in whose path, winter-summer, fear-love, richness-poverty do not become obstacles and who goes on advancing towards his goal constantly, may be called Tapasvi. Such persons are sure to be crowned with success sooner or later, as no hinderance of any magnitude can defeat their purpose. Actually they are courage incarnate and their company works like a magnet on their colleagues and followers.

Mahrishi Vyas says :

द्वन्द्व सहिष्णुत्वं तपः । नातपस्विनो योगः सिध्यति ।।

To be able to tolerate cheerfully the effects of the pairs of (*a*) respect or insult, (*b*) profit or loss, (*c*) life or death, (*d*) prosperity or adversity, and so on, is actual austerity and penance. An individual, who cannot adhere to this norm of austerity, can never become a yogi.

The lives of all great persons tell us the same story again and again. They had to face fierce opposition and all sorts of insults at the hands of his own people and many were done to death, for which they have become immortal in the annals of history. Mahatma Chanakya says—To control your sense organs is the gist of austerity. Indeed, there is nothing in this world that cannot be achieved by a Brahmachari. As

the Vedas proclaim— ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवा मृत्युमपाघ्नत । Because of the powers of Brahmacharya and its penance, the learned persons, who had attained divinity, could challenge the Death even. Brahmacharya is the source of power and plenty, virtue and vitality.

Shankaracharya has written :

न तपस्तप इत्याहु, ब्रह्मचर्यं तपोत्तमम् ।
ऊर्ध्वरेता भवेद्यस्तु, स देवो न तु मानुषः ।।

In all the austerities, the penance of Brahmacharya is the best; it makes a person competent to go into Samadhi because of the vigour and vitality that work as fuel to enlighten his path to divinity and thus he ceases to be a mere mortal, but becomes one of the gods. He is not only able to get what he wants here in this world, but is also able to attain salvation in the end. Such is the magnificent boon of austerity and penance.

The history of Arya-Varta is full of the life-stories of austerity (तप). Even the Rakshasas and demons used to practise penance in their lives, as detailed in Puranas, Mahabharat and Ramayana. What is the reason that in ancient times, austerity and penance was considered as the best means of fulfilling one's desires and many people adopted it in their life. While nowadays, we rarely come across any individual, save a few Sadhus, who demonstrate their powers to the public. But if we give proper thought to this, we will come to the conclusion that even now most of us practise austerity and penance; the only difference being that we also practise austerity and penance of the Rakshasas and demons, and not that of sages, Rishis and Munis. You may ask me 'How' ? The reply is that the sages, Rishis and

Munis used to adopt austerity for making their life pious and sacred, and salvation, *i.e.*, to do as much good to others as possible. But the Rakshas adopted austerity for getting power, strength, position and wealth—all these material gains, and we are also doing the same even now and ego takes hold of us, because neither Rakshas nor we think of spiritualism, *i.e.*, Atman or Parmatman. The result of such austerity and penance leads us nowhere as we remain entangled in the web of this world, thus making our life miserable all the more.

I read that the daughter of Himalaya, Parvati, did a spell of penance in order to get Shiva as her husband. For this, she rigorously followed the norms and the code of austerity and penance, the description of which has been given by Mahakavi Kalidas in his famous book known as 'Kumara-Sambhava'. The result was that Lord Shiva was pleased and accepted Parvati as his spouse. This again is a simile of very high order. Here Mother Nature has been symbolised as Parvati and God Almighty (the Creator) has been symbolised as Shiva. This is an allegory as Nature has been shown as the daughter of the Himalayan Mountains. Because the beauty and splenour of nature can be seen in its prime and youth in the valleys of the Himalayan ranges. There it is manifest in its elegance that its charm captivates the hearts of one and all, as the nature's unique and indescribable beauty lies abundantly spread all over. But to observe all this, one needs a pulsating sentimental heart and thoughtful eyes and mind. A Sanskrit poet has written :

क्षणे-क्षणे यत् नवताम् उपैति, तदेव रूपं रमणीयतायाः।

That which changes from second to second to newness all the times and its beauty and charm thus captivate our hearts.

So, Nature has done a long spell of penance for crores of years and God created this magnificent globe and the universe. This is the austerity of Parvati and the acceptance by Shiva as his spouse. Because the husband or master of this creation is God Himself.

With the heat of the Sun, our earth does penance, as a consequence of which we get all the bounties from our Mother Earth. Because the Sun's rays are responsible for the creation of clouds and consequent rains. Not only because of rains we get food in the shape of fruits, vegetables, etc., but even the store of minerals in the womb of the earth is caused by the rays of the Sun. And this is all the result of the austerity and penance that the earth has to undergo for long years continuously. Similarly, we see that the brahmacharis and students in their institutions of education and learning have to be initiated to undertake the required austerity and penance, so that they may be able to study properly, without any unnecessary distractions and come out enlightened, having got the required knowledge, so that they may be able to show the right path to many others in turn. As a matter of fact, we find that penance lies at the root of all the creations, whether animate or inanimate. This is the key to all the riddles and sooner we realise the fact, the better would it be for the welfare of the humanity as a whole.

तपोमूलमिदं सर्वं देव मानुषकम् सुखम् ।
तपो मध्यैः बुधैः प्रोक्तं तपोऽन्तं वेददर्शिभिः ॥

Austerity and penance, *i.e.*, Tapa, is at root of all the pleasures of the learned and divine people as well as those of the human-beings; Tapa is the intermediate as well as

the end cause, according to those who are awakened and well-versed in the Vedas. The sum and substance of all this is that from beginning to end in all the deeds of good people, it is austerity that helps them in accomplishing their satisfaction. Further, it has been stated :

ब्राह्मणस्य तपो ज्ञानं, तपो क्षत्रस्य रक्षणम् ।
वैश्यस्य तु तपो वार्ता, तपः शूद्रस्य सेवकम् ।।

A Brahman's penance is to attain knowledge and learning, while that of a Kshatriya is to give protection to the weak; similarly the penance of a Vaishya is to do business and that of a Shudra is to serve the people. But all of these Varnas must perform their respective duties honestly and sincerely. To perform their accepted work willingly thereby fulfilling the roles in a truthful manner in the society is a great service to the nation and humanity becomes dignified, as the penance bestows on the doers the honour that they rightly deserve.

यद् दुस्तरं यद् दुरापम् यद् दुर्गं यच्च दुष्करम् ।
सर्वन्तु तपसा साध्यं, तपो हि दुरतिक्रमम् ।।

Any work that is considered to be very difficult to accomplish or anything that may be thought of unachievable or any slopy mountainous peak considered to be inaccessible or any task that may be considered full of difficulties and hinderances, all these can certainly be done with the aid of penance. Because austerity or penance is such an infallible device that through it one can surmount even the most arduous and uphill tasks. All obstacles melt away before the blazing flames of the fire of penance. The example of Raja Ramchandraji Maharaj is before us all to ponder in

that it was because of the austerity and penance that the two brothers Ram and Lakshman did during the long years in exile wandering and attaining the education and skill in arms and weaponry in the ashrama of the various Rishis, that was ultimately responsible for making them victorious over such a mighty foe as Ravana and his followers.

Bhagwan Krishna has described in his memorable work Gita, three kinds of penance :

देव द्विजगुरु प्राज्ञ पूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ।।

The worship of the Gods, of the twice-born, of teachers and of the wise; purity, uprightness, continence and non-violence, this is said to be the penance of the body.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ।।

The utterance (of words) which gives no offence, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial and the regular recitation of the Veda or studying Vedic literature—this is said to be the penance of speech.

In Shantiparva (Mahabharat), it is stated—

अप्रियस्य च पथ्यस्य वक्ता श्रोता हि दुर्लभः ।

Of what is disagreeable and beneficial, the speaker and the hearer are hard to find. See what a European writer has to say :

If you, your lips would keep from slips,
Five things observe with care;
Of what you speak, to whom you speak,
And how, and when, and where.

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥

Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, the purity of mind—this is called the penance of mind. The readers who may be interested to know more in detail about MIND are advised to go through the book 'Might of Mind' by the author.

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत् त्रिविधं नरैः ।
अफला कांक्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥

This threefold penance practised with utmost faith by men of balanced mind without the expectation of reward, they call 'good'.

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम् ॥

The penance which is performed in order to gain respect, honour and reverence and for the sake of show, is said to be 'passionate'—it is unstable and not lasting.

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीड़या क्रियते तपः ।
परस्योत्सादनार्थं बा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥

The penance which is performed with a foolish obstinacy by means of self-torture or for causing injury to others, is said to be 'dull'.

Besides the above-mentioned penances, in olden days if someone committed a sin, he was asked to perform some penance in order to expiate the same. Because such a course stirred the feelings of regret in the mind of the sinner and in case he underwent the rigours of austerity to atone his sins,

he was more likely to be reformed. It was just to serve the purpose of reforming such people who did not come in the category of culprits strictly according to the laws of the land, but committed some lapse which needed to be rendered ineffective as also to reform the doer. As a matter of fact, the purpose of punishing the offenders and guilty persons is also the same. Though we have overlooked this factor and the modern justice is more or less revengeful in nature. However, even this type of justice is no more available to the people in our country because of the cost and time-consuming system of our courts, which literally proves 'justice delayed is justice denied' to the core.

From the above, it is clear that nothing can be achieved without austerity, *i.e.*, working hard either materially or spiritually. There are many verses in the Vedas that tell us about this sterling fact again and again and we have been told that laziness and idleness are the great enemies of mankind. He should discard these and gird up his loin, being ever ready to work because work is the only way to success. This is also the golden path to name and fame. This knowledge should dawn on each and every man, so that he does not waste even a second uselessly. It has been clearly stated in one of the verses that all the regions of the three lokas can be conquered through austerity and penance. Indeed there is nothing that which cannot be achieved by a Brahmachari and, as already explained, brahmacharya is the greatest penance. But it is very very difficult to practise it in all its varied forms.

Hereunder please see the verse from Atharva-Veda that

says that by austerity and hard work, one can win over death even :

येनातरन् भूतकृतोऽति मृत्युं,
यतन्वविन्दन् तपसा श्रमेण ।
यं पपाच ब्रह्मणे ब्रह्मपूर्वं,
तेनौदनेनाति तराणि मृत्युम् ॥

We may overcome the death with the Brahmaudan (*i.e.* divine food of self-restraint) by means of which the Gods, Creators of the animals, surpassed the death. The Gods obtained that Brahmaudan by their hard work and penance. It was prepared by God for the welfare of the mankind.

Again in another verse of Atharva-Veda, it has been stated that you may annihilate the sorcerers by your penances, the evil-doers by your fury, the worshippers of dim witted deities by your lustre and destroy the murderers and parasites, who lead their lives on the earnings of others and do not care to work for themselves. In our scriptures, Upnishadas and Mahabharat, we read how people used to do penance and attained whatever they wanted from the gods, whom they worshipped. These are all parables and we should consider them accordingly. With whatever aim or object, one continues to work incessantly with devotion and single-mindedness, he is sure to achieve his goal and this is called austerity or penance in allegorical terms.

We also read the stories of how Indra used to create disturbances in the penance of the various Rishis and Munis. Because Indra was afraid that in case anyone of them succeeded, then he would be dethroned from the pedestal of

Indra and the one, who could successfully complete his penance, would be crowned instead. The story of Rishi Vishwamitra is well known to all. Indra sent the beautiful Apsara Menaka from his kingdom to disturb the brahmacharya-penance of the Rishi and she was successful in enticing him. As a result, the Rishi's penance was disturbed. There are many such stories. Even now we see such things happening in our world, more so in our own country, where the one, who somehow is able to grab the seat of power, is not willing to leave it under any circumstances and wants to continue to occupy the chair. So, these Indras are trying to disturb the penance of their rivals, *i.e.*, who are in the opposition and malign them, so that they may not get elected, thereby depriving the present occupants of the chair. It has been truly said—"Through austerity and penance, one gets the throne and because the power, plenty and prosperity go to his head, he becomes easy-going and licentious, thus ultimately he is discarded to hell." Hence, even when in power, abnegation and austerity and penance must be continued, so that you may work seldessly for the good of the public, who may elect you again to the throne.

# 12
# Wonderful (चैत्र)

From the discussion in the previous chapters, it is clear that the message we get from the rotating months in a calendar year is that we should try to imbibe the qualities and virtues that their names indicate and thus become Indra in our own sphere of activity. But this can only be achieved by practising austerity and penance in life through controlling our sensual desires and shedding selfishness altogether. This is very essential for mustering the support of all the people, who may willingly accept you as their undisputed leader, because of your virtues and be ready to lay down their life at your bidding. Such reverence by the people can only be possible because of your sacrifices that you must be always ready to do as and when any opportunity comes. And this spirit of do or die, comes with the observance of austerity and penance.

Going back to the days of Mahabharat, about 5,000 years ago, when there arose the tussle between Kauravas and Pandavas over the throne and division of the kingdom. In his haughtiness and jealousy, Duryodhana did not agree to give even a small share of the kingdom to the Pandavas. By fraud in the game of gambling they were banished to the forests for twelve years and the thirteenth year, the Pandavas

were required to spend *in cognito*. Otherwise, they were to be banished for another spell of twelve years to the forests. During the period of banishment, it became obvious to the, Pandavas that for regaining their share, they will have to wage a war. Hence, Arjuna, who was a very skilled warrior, thought of a plan to go to the Mangal Lok for training in the warfare in advanced technology. He begged permission from his brothers and Draupadi and left for the Mangal Lok, where he spent three years and four days, learning all about more advanced technology in warfare.

During his sojourn in Mangal Lok, Arjuna quite often had to attend the court of the Indra of that Lok and Arjuna had accepted the Indra there as his father, because of age as also the fact that he was getting training there. Once it so happened that a very beautiful damsel named Apsara Urvashi, was performing her dance in the Indra's court and Arjuna was also present. Naturally, Arjuna was very much delighted. But this created a wrong impression in the mind of the Indra, who told Urvashi to go to the chamber of Arjuna that night. She was pleased at this and at nightfall reached the chamber where Arjuna was staying. With her amorous overtures, she advanced towards Arjuna and told him the purpose for which she had come to him. Arjuna was taken aback and told her that it was impossible for him to accept her, because she was just like his mother, as he had already accepted the Indra as his father and she, being in the service of the Indra, was like a mother to him.

As a matter of fact, while all this highlights the outcome of rigorous austerity and penance in the form of brahmacharya

we can also learn from this episode as to how our ancestors were cautious in their approach even in the matters of love affairs. If we read between the lines, the banishment period of the Pandavas was also a long spell of austerity and penance for all of them, that enabled them to overcome their weaknesses and become strong for the ensuing war, which was to follow subsequently.

A mother also does penance for producing a child, only if she knows the secret that it is she who can make the offspring according to her desire, for which she must observe the rules of austerity. Mother Kaushalya knew this and as per her resolve, she did the required penance and was able to give to the world a great personality of Ram, who is remembered by people even now after a lapse of about nine lakh years. The Sanskrit adage—माता निर्माता भवति—is quite true. But who is to do penance and lead a life of austerity ? The example of Mother Kunti is before us all to see. When unmarried, she as a young girl whilst studying in the Ashram of a Rishi at that time, had plenty of knowledge, yet when per chance a young brahmachari Shweta Muni came there, they had the affair and Kunti became pregnant. She told all this to her preceptor, who though admonished her for the lapse and asked her to lead the life of austerity and penance thereafter in order to atone her sin. During the period of pregnancy, Kunti thought in her mind that her son should be as lustrous as the Sun. We all now know that it was none else, but Karna. Similarly after marriage with Pandu, she made up her mind, when she became pregnant for the first time that her son should be Dharma incarnate and her first child was Dharmaraj Yudhishther. About her

second pregnancy, she thought that her son be like Hanuman, who may be skilled in club-warfare and strong. So, the second child was Bhima. Third time Kunti resolved in her mind that her son should be like that of Indra and it was Arjuna. Really speaking, in the matter of making good and noble children, Kunti was well-versed and for this she duly observed all the rules of austerity and meticulously did penance with pleasure.

During the same period, we see on the stage another great personality, known as Bhagwan Krishna who soon after marriage with Rukmani, went to the ranges of the Himalayas along with his wife and both of them prepared themselves there in the vicinity of Nature, following the rules of austerity and penance for long twelve years. Only after this, they entered into conjugal relationship and produced the son, known as Pradyumna in the history. I have read about Pradyumna that when he became young he was so much like his father Lord Krishna that it was not possible to recognise as to who was who, when both of them walked together. What I am trying to drive at is that it is the onerous duty of the parents to produce good and able children and it can be possible only if they themselves lead a good, noble and virtuous life and remain firm on righteousness honestly and truthfully with austerity and penance. We must observe brahmacharya as much as possible, *viz.*, controlling our senses and mind, so that they do not stray into sexual and other worldly pleasures. Everything in proper limits and at proper time suits admirably. But nowadays, we find that money, sex and violence have been extolled so much that these have totally engrossed the minds of our people. Thus, the

nation on the whole is becoming characterless day by day and the rulers are responsible for this state of affairs, because education and the mass-media of cinema, television, etc. are virtually controlled by the Government.

In ancient times, we read that majority of the people undertook to lead a life of austerity and penance because of their education and training in the Ashramas. The habit of simple living and high thinking was drained into the minds of the children at an early age and the craze was to get as much knowledge as possible, as against wealth, that we witness today. We read many stories of Rishis and Munis who led a simple and austere life, in spite of the fact that they could amass plenty of wealth.

In Upnishadas, the tale of Satyakam-Jabal is quite well known. When still a child, he urged his mother to allow him to go to the Ashram of Rishi Gautam for studies. His mother was a poor maid-servant, doing menial work in many households for living and her name was Jabala. She readily agreed to her son's request and accordingly the child set forth for the Ashram of the Rishi. On reaching there, he met the Rishi and put forth his desire. The Rishi asked him certain questions, one of which was what is the name of your father ? The boy told the Rishi that his mother's name was Jabala and his mother calls him as Satyakam-Jabal, but he does not know the name of his father, because he had never seen him. Gautam Rishi, therefore, sent him back to find out the name of his father and on returning home, the boy put the question to his mother. But you know what his mother's reply was "Son ! During my work in various households, I do not know as to when and by whom you were conceived.

Hence, I am sorry, I cannot tell you as to who your father is ?" The boy on returning to the Ashram of the Rishi told him exactly the same.

The Rishi was very much impressed by the stark truth that the boy and his mother Jabala spoke. He at once declared that you are the son of a Brahmin, as you have spoken the truth, without caring for the consequences. But the Rishi did not give him education like other boys in his Ashram. Instead he put a few hundred cows under Satyakam-Jabal's charge, telling him that he should tend these cows in the forests and return to the Ashram only when the herd becomes one thousand. The poor boy undertook this penance and followed the cows for years, at the same time studying whatever he could by himself. Then one day, he realised that the number of his cows has already become one thousand. So, he returned with them to the Ashram, no doubt takin the opportunity as best as he could to study and gain knowledge, not only theoretical but practical as well.

On his return to the Ashram, the Rishi gave him a fittin reception and on seeing that the boy had become a youngma and with proper education, real knowledge and learning, better than all his colleagues who were getting their education at the Ashram, the Rishi declared that during his absence, the charge of the Ashram would be in the hands of Satyakam-Jabal. So, it matters little whether one is born of poor parents; what matters most in life is how you go about it yourself and work hard to improve your education and knowledge. One basic fact should never be ignored in life that honesty, truthfulness, noble and virtuous qualities are

not only masks for appearing to be a gentleman, these must be practised at all moments through and through even at the cost of some comforts or even the necessities of life. When you are prepared to make the greatest sacrifice for the sake of your own character, then indeed the spirit of penance shows its real colour.

The lives of all great men and women are there before us to take inspiration and learn as to how they had to face the ordeal of vehement opposition from their own people. Yet they continued their voyage undaunted, accepting these challenges gladly, fully realising that it was their expected reward for which they had bargained already. For a common man, in Upnishad Brihadaranyaka, it has been stated that whenever anybody falls sick, he should not cry with pains, but tolerate these with patience. Because by crying all the time, he makes the life of all those who have to look after him miserable. But if he considers the ailment as punishment for his lapse and gladly accepts the trouble, it is a sort of penance. Similarly, to take a dead body to the cremation ground and perform the rites of lighting the pyre, etc. is also a penance and nobody should shirk such an opportunity. In my childhood, I heard the old people say—"If you attend one hundred funerals, you are sure to go to heaven; if you attend one hundred marriage-parties, you are sure to go to hell." Now what does all this mean ? Clearly, when one attends funerals, his mind, ideas and thoughts converge on the basic issues of life and death, God and soul, as also on the transient nature of the world. While at the time of marriages, one generally thinks of the merriment, frolic and fun, that also of lewd nature most of the time. Hence, these two states of condition have been compared to heaven and hell.

The period of student-life is nothing but penance and the more a student is able to lead an austere life, the more he is likely to succeed in his mission. As a matter of fact, in all walks of life, austerity and penance have to be practised in order to achieve some remarkable success. A Sanskrit poet has described the duties of a student as under :—

व्यायामो विनयो विद्या विवेको वीर्य--रक्षणम् ।
एते पंच वकारास्यु: विद्यार्थिन: युगे-युगे ।।

Daily exercise, to study, being humble and polite, with wisdom and discretion and to preserve the vital fluid (semen) are the five 'Vakaras' which the students have to accept in life from times immemorial.

Another Sanskrit poet has stated :

सुखार्थिन: कुतो विद्या, विद्यार्थिन: कुतो सुखम् ।।

One, who wants joys and merriment in life, cannot be successful in attaining the necessary education and knowledge; while the one who is desirous of attaining the necessary education and learning, there is no place for joys and merriment in his life. Clearly, here again it has been emphasised that the student-life is the life of austerity and penance. While this may not be manifest in the Western type of schools and colleges, it is quite obvious when we see the brahmacharis of any Gurukula.

If we cast our glance on the history of the recent past, let alone the times of Rishis and Munis, we see that Gautam Buddha, Mahavir Swami, Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekanand and Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati, all these great men abandoned the

life of pleasure, plenty and prosperity with their own free will and opted for austerity and penance. All because, they realised the fact that with simplicity, it is easy to tread the path of gods that leads one to divinity. So, is the case now. It is just not possible to sail in two boats at the same time. Later on, we see Swami Shraddhanand following the same path and Mahatma Gandhi also practised austerity and penance in his own inimitable way. So was the case with Vinoba Bhave, who followed in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi. As is well known to most of the people, Mahatma Gandhi undertook fasts many times in his life. Similarly, Vinoba Bhave was also a very saintly person and when the Government did not yield to the public demand of stopping the slaughter of cows for quite many years, he undertook the fast unto death and gave up his life. Yet the country has arrived at such a critical stage that neither the conscience of the rulers, nor that of the public at large has stirred to stop this heinous crime that goes on unabated, which is largely responsible for making the future dark of the nation as a whole. This is a country where the rivers of milk and ghee used to flow and now it is just not possible to get good milk at a reasonable price.

Before concluding, I may quote the gist of some verses from the Vedas that tell us that in order to be able to become a wonderful and charismatic personality, it is essential for an individual to practise austerity and penance. Because only by undertaking such a vow, one is able to control his passions, etc., that are generally responsible for the weaknesses and ultimate downfall. But in case, he is able to lead an austere simple and lust-free life, which he begins to relish

in course of time, he acquires divinity and godliness, thereby not only saves himself from the various sins, but is able to achieve real success. In other words, we have to adhere to brahmacharya as much as possible, shunning lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, laziness, etc., etc. and be magnanimous, with friendly attitude towards all.

Mainly there are two attractions, which generally ruin our progress—कंचन व कामिनी। Money and women; of course these are essential in life, more so for a family man, but these are not all. These are only means and not an end; the end, aim or object is much more higher and loftier and we should ever keep that in view and because of our carelessness not fall in midway in these ditches. In so far as the vital fluid is concerned, we must be very cautious about it, as its preservatian enables us to make fresh inroads into the arena of knowledge. Besides, the body and mind remain healthy and our intellect sharp. The life span is lengthened and our prayer 'जीवेम शरदः शतम्' is fulfilled, at the same time never falling sick. Thus, such a person enjoys life, doing service to the people in right earnest.

With the knowledge, the ascetic and yajnik people using their intelligence in the best way possible, *i.e.*, they work hard devotedly and the sweat that flows because of the labour is able to fulfil all their aspirations and hopes. So long as a man does not completely absorb his all attention and devotion to the work that he has undertaken to accomplish, the task though completed, does not reach the acme of performance and skill that may attract the attention of one and all because of its excellence. As the sun's rays warm the air in

the space, the air in turn changes the water into vapours and clouds that cause rain, ultimately giving us plenty of food and grain, all because of the penance of these elements.

In one of the verses of Rig-Veda, we have been told clearly that those who do penance, only they are able to attain salvation. It has also been stated that austerity and penance, *i.e.*, brahmacharya is above all in this world and those who observe it in their life are able to get the highest place; they are given the highest regard and respect by the people and even kings and monarchs bow at their feet. A king who rules his subjects, treating all the people as if they were members of his own family, with love and sincerity truthfully, his reign becomes not only durable and lasting, but worth remembering by posterity, an example that many others like to follow.

The learned people who practise austerity and penance in their life, their voice fills the space all round and reaches up to God Almighty. As a matter of fact, the entire society of mankind can be divided into four varnas, *viz.*, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Those who are engaged in imparting knowledge and learning and allied work, they can all be called Brahmans. Those who are engaged in defence, security and imparting justice and allied subjects can easily be termed as Kshatriyas. Those engaged in production, trade and business, *viz.*, agriculture and farming, cow-breeding and other cattle-breeding, and production in factories, mills, etc. as also in distribution of the various goods, can be called Vaishyas. While those who cannot do any of these independently, but engaged in helping anyone of the above

physically can be termed as Shudras. But all these people have to do some penance for attaining the skill of the work. So, the sum and substance of all this is that without austerity and penance of some sort, it is just not possible to exist and the more one practises leading a life of abnegation, the more higher he is able to rise in life proportionately.

The month of Chaitra is also called as the month of honey, because of the Spring season which is called as the king of all seasons thoughout the year. In Hindi we call it 'Basant' and as this season comes soon after the autumn season, in which the leaves of the trees are shed being withered because of the winter, new and soft multicoloured leaves sprout all over the bushes and trees, giving the vegetation and the flora world a splendid and wonderful clothing. It appears as if the forests are all covered with golden colours spread over them, with the breeze and the entire scene is filled by indescribable charm and beauty. Besides, the flowers also show their heads by and by, where the bees can be seen collecting honey from flower to flower.

The nature can be seen at its best in the Spring season because of the penance it did during the severe cold of winter and autumn seasons. Sant Tulsidas has written an excellent couplet as under, describing the season :

ऋतु बसन्त याचक भया, हरषि दिया द्रुम पात ।
ताते नव पल्लव भया, दिया दूर नहिं जात ।।

The spring season became a beggar and the trees gave their leaves with pleasure as a result of this they got new leaves—this proves that giving alms does not go in vain.

The word 'Madhu' has double meaning—(1) honey, and (2) knowledge. Both of these are really wonderful in that the first is the best exhilarating food, while the second makes our life worth some meaning. We then easily deduce from this that we should always take such food (Satvik) and acquire as much knowledge as we can, so that our life may really become marvellous and wonderful. I may here mention the fact that honey is given to the newly born babe in the Sanskara performed at that time; so is the case when the bridegroom reaches the bride's home, he is given 'Madhupark' honey mixed with curd—at the beginning of the marriage ceremony. In the 'Vivah-Sanskara'—the bridegroom is given honey and curd by the bride to eat, as a mark of respect and love to her guest, who soon after becomes her husband. Symbolically also, we may say that the bride expects her husband to be sweet in speech and wonderful in all respects.